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About this book

Schwipper, Bernd (2022-06-02T22:58:59.000). Germany in Stalin's sights: the path of the Red Army into the European War and the deployment of the Wehrmacht in 1941 (German Edition) (p. 14). Kindle Edition. Whoever tells the truth, the popular saying wishes him, among other things, a fast horse. There is a reason for that. It is not the case that truth is everywhere and always a valued asset. On the contrary, it is a heavy food, which is not tolerated by many and whose spread is fought. Truth is also not a self-runner, which could assert itself by own strength in the course of the time. The world has seen many truths that no one knows today. At some point they were no longer spoken, be it because they were simply forgotten, be it because no one had the courage to speak them anymore. It is necessary to state this once again, because completely regardless of these facts, which are known in themselves, today's society dawns on itself in questions about the contemporary history of the World War era in the mistaken belief that the truth in this case is, firstly, known and, secondly, is cherished, secured and disseminated by a comprehensive system of university, academic historiography. In Germany in particular, both politics and the people derive an essential part of their identity from the belief in the world of the past, which is produced in this way and which is much invoked under the term "our history. Only under consideration of these circumstances it can be explained that the actual truth about the prehistory of the German Russian campaign of 1941 is so stubbornly veiled by the myth of an unprovoked invasion of the allegedly unprepared Soviet Russia. The average citizen, when asked about the more detailed circumstances of the German attack, is very likely to speak of habitat conquest plans of a German dictator as the cause and of German tank masses that rolled across the vast Russian plains without resistance. Asked about the more exact numerical proportions of the rolling material, he will assume a German superiority and never, ever get the idea that this ratio on the day of the beginning of the war actually stood at an astonishing 7:1 - in favor of the Soviet Union. Such numerical ratios play no role for wide areas of academic historiography. Instead, it has spread comparable ignorance about the political prehistory of "Unternehmen Barbarossa." Let us take an example of the excesses to which this has sometimes escalated. Some time ago, Rolf-Dieter Müller, a long-time employee of the Military Historical Research Office and holder of a professorial title, published a book on "Hitler's Secret Plans for a War against the Soviet Union in 1939." Any hard-hitting evidence was not included in it. But the whole misery of this kind of historiography was revealed by a remark on page 79: "Reich Foreign Minister Constantin Frhr. von Neurath assured the American ambassador William C. Bullitt on May 18, 1936, that from Hitler's point of view the enmity to the USSR was insurmountable and that he wanted to remain quiet only until the western fortifications were completed." ¹ So the German foreign minister is supposed to have announced to a US chief diplomat trustingly the imminent German attack on the USSR. Of course, this is flat wrong. If one looks up the place indicated, Neurath said, on the contrary, that the hostility was insurmountable because of the attitude of the USSR. This was so because, from Moscow's point of view, Germany would represent the essential obstacle to a communist conquest of Europe.² On top of that, he was also right, as the author of these lines, among others, has already pointed out³ and for which further numerous proofs are presented in the present book by Bernd Schwipper. But apart from that, this episode illustrates the occasionally total alienation of contemporary academic publications from their subject matter. No historian with a solidly trained historical

consciousness would formulate such a sentence, completely out of time, which makes the German foreign minister a traitor to his country and turns the world of thought of the German dictator into its opposite. A few weeks after the Neurath-Bullitt conversation, Hitler formulated this world of thought in the well-known "Denkschrift zum Vierjahresplan." The German armed forces would have to be ready for war in four years, was his conclusion at the end of the document. This is often quoted and even finds its way into school textbooks and information on political education, because it leads from the summer of 1936 to the vicinity of the fall of 1939 and therefore suggests a plan of attack. Almost never and certainly not in political education, on the other hand, is the preceding justification of the German dictator for this demand quoted. For which war should the German Wehrmacht be ready in four years? It should be ready for the defense against a Soviet attack. According to Hitler, Soviet communism was already in the process of deploying all the reserves of the largest country in the world under its control in preparation for such an attack. How and with which rates of increase this proceeded in detail, about it we learn quite a few news from Bernd Schwipper. Especially the operational plans of the Red Army in 1940 and 1941, the armament changes and the steady increase of the Soviet forces, as well as their command situation in the early summer of 1941 become visible in a partly completely new way. In doing so, the author relies on an unprecedented analysis of Soviet sources and takes into account the Russian-language research literature that is otherwise not taken into account in Germany. The result is clear: The Red Army wanted and was supposed to attack Germany in early July 1941. Its armament, deployment, operational planning and command were geared to this goal – and to nothing else. It can be recalled at this point that the official state of research on Soviet attack plans was not always as bad in Germany as it is today. The 1990s saw some movement on this issue after the dissolution of the real socialist bloc. The then director of the German Historical Institute in Moscow, Professor Bernd Bonwetsch, summarized the state of knowledge about Soviet military preparations in 2000 with the words: The order for the Red Army to attack could have been given "as of July 10, 1941 – if Stalin had really wanted to give it or had given it and if Hitler had not pre-empted it with his attack order." ⁴ Without Bonwetsch being able to bring himself to turn away from the conventional picture according to which aggression had nevertheless basically come from Germany, this was a partially accurate approach to the Soviet starting position. It soon became one of the rarely remembered truths. A Soviet attack stermin the beginning of July 1941 was also determined by an author who should not be forgotten here, because he caused a furor and a first breath of fresh air with his writings at the end of the 1980s. Under the pseudonym Viktor Suvorov, the former Soviet agent Vladimir Rezun also let Russian sources speak, but without completely disclosing them. ⁵ Bernd Schwipper, on the other hand, now presents a comprehensive analysis, considered in all points and carefully documented, with which the question of whether the German attack on the USSR in 1941 was a "preventive war" is once again answered with a justified yes on the basis of Russian sources. One can only wish the book a good fate and much resonance. Possibly then as a consequence in the German contemporary history research another circle of persons than the truth lovers should strive for a fast horse.

Stefan Scheil, August 2015

Preface The sole aim of this study is to search for and uncover the historical truth. The objectivity of the observation requires to base the historical picture not on wishful thinking, but on objective incontestable historical facts, in order to work out from the facts a true picture of the real military-political events/processes. Also in the historiography the truth is at present probably more a function of the power as well as the political calculation of the in each case ruling parties. The winner still writes the history. With unbelievable, undoubtedly ideologically justified ignorance historical facts are overlooked

in the present historiography, opinions are dogmatized and facts described in the sources, which do not fit into these dogmas, are completely disregarded. Chains of argumentation are put together according to one's own firmly held political positions, interpreted in a one-sided way, and thus the historical picture is distorted. The terms "Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union" and "Hitler's race-ideological war of extermination", which have accompanied us since our childhood and found their way into all history books as dogmas and still do today, cannot continue to exist (in this form and with these interpretations given to them), since they do not take into account the movement and development of the historical situation at that time in any way. They are ideologically determined terms. The evaluation of a large number of Russian documents permitted a sufficient depth of focus in the consideration of the historical processes in the run-up to the German-Soviet war. Since all core statements of the study are based on these Russian documents, all skeptics and critics are advised to first deal with these documents personally. It should already be pointed out in the preface that it was not possible to find a conclusive answer to all open questions in connection with the pre-war period of the German-Soviet war. Certainly, the complete opening of the archives, the access to all documents of the political and military leadership of the USSR as well as to the planning also of the military districts/ fronts, the armies and corps is a necessary condition for this. Knowing that the absolute truth cannot be achieved and that I do not claim it, I think that I have the obligation to at least come close to it, as far as the state of publication of the documents from the Russian archives and the documents available to me allow. Although it seems hardly possible to influence the historical consciousness of the majority of Germans with the results of the present work, as well as with the findings of a number of other historians, this attempt should nevertheless be made in the interest of historical truth. Last but not least, thanks are due to many friends for their support in obtaining the necessary literature, and to my wife Christel for her patience over many years during my occupation with this study, without which this book would never have been written.

May 18, 2015

Dr. rer. mil. Bernd Schwipper

Introduction The content of this study is the examination of the pre-war period of the years 1939 to 1941, preceding the outbreak of the German-Soviet war. Despite the recognition of the necessity for an all-round assessment of the subject to be examined, in view of the complexity of the facts, the almost endless abundance of political, economic, diplomatic and military facts and contexts of that period, it was not attempted to give an all-round account of the prehistory of the German-Soviet war. In order to avoid any reproach of the contents of the following study with regard to a possible inadmissible simplification or one-sidedness in the assessment of this extraordinarily complex situation in the immediate pre-war period, we would like to refer once again to the restrictive objective of this study, which consisted primarily in the analysis of the military-political facts. Other areas of the USSR, such as the development of interstate relations and contradictions, the development of the economy, international economic and trade relations, the substantive development of ideological and political-propagandistic work, the management of processes by the CPSU, the influence of the Comintern, diplomatic activities, etc., were only touched upon as necessary, based on the consideration that these political and economic areas had already been adequately examined by other authors.

The underlying sources The core of the sources used for this study consists of more than 2400 published Russian documents, more than 650 reconnaissance reports and information, and 467 Red Army reports on the status of mobilization readiness, etc. In particular, documents from the Archives of the President of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Military Archives, the Foreign Policy Archives of the Russian

Federation and the Archives of the Reconnaissance Service of the Russian Federation (1998 edition), documents of military reconnaissance (Moscow 2008), the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus (Minsk 2007) and documents of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus (Moscow 2006) found their way into this research.

These publications are, in principle, transcripts of the original documents, the release of which took place primarily under President Yeltsin. However, highly explosive documents or parts of documents with compromising content were not published, the maps and appendices are missing for all documents, and documents from the so-called "Red Packages" are not accessible. In the era of President Putin, access to the archived documents was again made more difficult. Fortunately, in May 2015, extensive German documents were digitized and published on the Internet, some of which could still be incorporated. A large number of specialist and non-fiction books from the Soviet and post-Soviet era, both critical and apologetic contemporary Russian literature, as well as related articles published in various Russian military history journals and magazines, and descriptions of the historical processes were also incorporated. The approximately 40 memoirs published by Soviet generals and officers, some of which were available to the author in the original, could only be used with regard to some quotations and facts. Figures contained in these memoirs, on the other hand, often deviate substantially from those of the analyzed documents, since the historical contexts were only allowed to be considered in compliance with normative guidelines, which were worked out by institutes of historical science at Stalin's request. Also, the account of the pre-war period of the German-Soviet war was often completely omitted. The comparative view of the actions of the Wehrmacht was based on Halder's records, the war diaries of the High Commands of the Wehrmacht and the Army, the war diaries of the Naval War Command, the reports of the High Command of the Wehrmacht including the special reports, the documents of the OKW, the OKH and Army Group B/Center digitized by the German Historical Institute Moscow, the statements of the generals in the trial before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, as well as a number of press publications of the time that are still accessible. Essential facts and figures could be taken from the works of Mueller-Hillebrand, Philipp/Heim, Hubatsch and Tippelskirch, the memoirs of Warlimont, Kesselring, Guderian and others. The evaluation of a large number of chronicles and troop histories of the units transferred to the east in the pre-war period also yielded valuable insights. Nevertheless, those who believe that they can fall back on unadulterated source editions seem to be mistaken. This applies to both the Russian and the German sources.

Occupation historiography has left its mark on the sources. This also applies to Halder's war diary. For example, Halder worked for the Historical Department of the U.S. Army since 1946 as head of a research group of up to 150 German officers on the preparation of war studies. Even the entry "Military Government Information Control License US-E 273" in his booklet "Hitler als Feldherr", published in 1949, confirms the examination and approval by the US military control authorities. The war diaries of the naval warfare command carry in principle the registration by the British Admiralty (Part A, Vol. 10 e.g.: "Case GE 110 PG 32030"). Thus, they contain only what was convenient for the victors. Even the first 33-page Bavarian School Atlas published in 1948 bears the entry "Approved for use in schools by Office of Military Government (U.S.), Education and Cultural Relations Division on 4/16/1947 GE-IA 350.01 (Germany)." In order to exclude a speculative approach to history on such bases, the author considered it appropriate to subject primarily undisputed figures and historically proven facts to analysis, to look for internal connections between the facts, to find the truth by comparing them with the statements of the various sources, and, in processing all the above-mentioned sources, to detect even the

"quiet tones" hidden in the lines. A laudable exception are the documents of the High Commands of the Wehrmacht and the Army as well as of Army Group B/ Mitte, which were digitized by the German Historical Institute Moscow and put online in April 2015, the contents of which are by no means to be doubted. However, a pre-selection was also made here. Thus, the documents significant to the subject of this study and the short period of the pre-war period are extraordinarily sparse. Of the documents of Army Group B/Center, primarily meaningless reports and accounts, including those about document finds or losses, have been published. An objective truth, which in the opinion of the author is not attainable at all, can therefore also not offer the present study. However, to approach it maximally by an abundance of relative truths is already the goal of this study. The reader may judge whether this has been achieved.

The method The author has by no means simply collected a multitude of figures and quotations, but has followed a strict analytical procedure according to dialectical principles and categories. In order to examine the military-political situation in the period preceding the German-Soviet war, a number of decisive fields of action were selected which are significant for answering the question "Who preceded whom or wanted to precede whom?" without aiming at an all-round consideration of all areas. The methodological approach and the fields of action considered by the author are shown in the following figure: SF = Conclusions Each chapter is concluded with conclusions. The explanations in the individual chapters follow the chronological sequence of events. Only in Chapter IX, Operational Plans, the analysis of the individual elements of the decision is carried out by means of horizontal sections through the individual elements of the operational plans of the General Staff of the Red Army, with the aim of identifying in this way development trends and differences, contrasts or contradictions, and arriving at accurate conclusions. The numbers, facts, circumstances and quotations serving the purpose of the study are not given with the aim to speak for themselves, but have an exemplary character, serve the analysis and evidence and thus the actual goal of the study, the further and deeper knowledge gain. In order to ensure understanding of the content of the individual chapters and to clarify their overall context, repetitions of some facts and statements in a number of chapters were unavoidable. For the sake of simplicity and because of the multiple repetitions of the operational plans, no mention is made of the full names of these plans/considerations, but only the designation "operational plan of ..." is used. The present work is a study, not a reader. Nevertheless, in order to ensure a certain readability and understanding of the interrelationships, graphs, tables and also longer passages, for example of quotations, have been incorporated into the running text and not put into appendices. With the same goal in mind, the author avoided abbreviations in the text; in tables, their use became unavoidable. In order to trace a realistic picture of the processes that objectively took place, the Red Army's attack preparations were considered in their differentiation and change. Translations The translations from Russian were provided by the author. In order to be able to understand the Russian documents in their entirety, the translations were largely word-for-word, even if this meant that stylistic compromises were sometimes necessary in German. Some translations (e.g. of the operational plans or of directives and instructions) correspond to the linguistic usage, which sounds strange to the uninitiated, but is common in the military. If, for example, the translation of the operation plans says "to have", "to inflict", "to destroy", then in military usage the entire statements/orders are always mentally preceded by the formulation "I suggest...", "I order..." etc.

Transcriptions of the Russian alphabet were made according to the Russian-German dictionary by Daum/Schenk. Figures Because of the variety of contradictory figures published in the literature about the Red Army, almost all figures about the Red Army that the author put into tables and other figures

were taken from Russian documents. For the Wehrmacht only those figures were used, which are mentioned in the sources. Figures from memoirs and various historical works (e.g., regarding the number of divisions of the Red Army) were not taken into account, since the times or conditions under which they applied were rarely described, or they were often not considered in their movement and development in the course of the USSR's war preparation period or the Red Army's deployment. Place names In view of the change of place names caused by the historical development (e.g.: Lviv – Lvov – Lviv; German – Russian – Ukrainian) these were used according to the time and the documents and transcribed according to the dictionary Daum/Schenk. Place names in excerpts from German documents or from the point of view of the Wehrmacht are designated in German, e.g. not Lwow, but Lemberg. Orthography The author has followed the computer correction program and the Duden edition 2000 to the new regulation of the German orthography. In the case of quotations from German-language documents, the original spelling contained in these documents was retained, e.g.: "... , that..." In the case of quotations translated from Russian, the new rules have been applied. All quotations are written in italics.

I. Chapter The creation and development of the strategic deployment space/the theater of war A theater of war is the territory (land, air and sea) on which the armed forces solve strategic tasks in war. 1 For the conduct of war operations, the character of the theater of war is of paramount importance. Its size and configuration, geographical characteristics, special features favoring or hindering the conduct of offensive or defensive operations, the possibilities for securing the flanks, the availability of resources of all kinds to supply the armed forces, the condition of infrastructure elements (railroads, roads, bridges, waterways, airfields, communications, etc.), economic structure, population density, climate and weather conditions have a decisive influence on the planning of hostilities and the manner in which they are conducted. 1. the creation of the theater of war Despite existing non-aggression treaties, the USSR, in the slipstream of the German-Polish war as well as the following European war, began a series of military activities in the western theater of war from September 17, 1939, which were usually referred to as campaigns in the documents of the General Staff of the Red Army as well as in the memoirs of contemporary witnesses. Table I.1 below shows the campaigns conducted or planned by the Soviet Union in all directions of the Western theater of war, virtually without any breaks in operations:

Table I.1	Beginning of the campaign	Occupied territories	September 17, 1939	November 1939	March 13, 1940	April 1940	June 17, 1940	June 28, 1940	July to early September 1940	Possibly late 1940/early 1941
	"Polish campaign,"	occupation of western Belarus and western Ukraine	First Soviet-Finnish war, gen. "Winter War",	occupation of parts of Finland	Transfer of considerable troop contingents to the Kiev Special and Odessa Military Districts in preparation for the Bessarabian Campaign, as well as to the Crimea/Caucasus region to defend the petroleum areas around Baku/Batumi against expected British and French bombing raids	"Baltic Campaign",	Military occupation of the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia	"Bessarabian Campaign",	occupation of Bessarabia and Bukovina	Concentration of strong forces in the Leningrad, Baltic Special and Western Special Military Districts for a planned "East Prussian Campaign"
	Second planned Soviet-Finnish war, gen. "Continuation War"									

Let us take a closer look at the Red Army campaigns mentioned in Table I.1 in a brief outline, without going into details of the political, economic, and diplomatic processes that took place in the run-up to them.

17 September 1939 – The Polish campaign of the USSR The decision to trigger the partial mobilization was taken on 6 September 1939, i.e. the entry into the German-Polish war was planned at this time at the latest. At this early date, however, there could be no question of a threat to the ethnic Belarusian or Ukrainian population by the Wehrmacht, as was argued. The triggering of the covered partial mobilization (cf. Chapter III, Mobilization) took place on September 7, 1939, camouflaged under the pretext of carrying out "large-scale training exercises". On September 9, 1939, the People's Commissar for Defense of the USSR, K. E. Voroshilov, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, B. M. Shaposhnikov, issued the order on the covert deployment of the assault groupings of troops of the Byelorussian and Kiev Special Military Districts and their concentration in the border area until September 11, 1939. To carry out the operations, on September 11, 1939, the General Staff of the Red Army formed two fronts: on the base of the Byelorussian Special Military District, the Byelorussian Front, in the inventory the 3rd, 4th, 10th, and 11th Armies, the 23rd Independent Rifle Corps, and a mechanized cavalry group; and on the base of the Kiev Special Military District, the Ukrainian Front, in the inventory the 5th, 6th, and 12th Armies.² The Wehrmacht, whose attack on Poland had begun on 01 September 1939, reached the line Lvov – Vladimir-Volynsky – Brest – Belostok on 16 September 1939. Obviously due to the unexpectedly rapid advance of the Wehrmacht, without waiting for the complete concentration of all troops, especially those of the Belorussian Special Military District, the attack of the Red Army with advance divisions and mobile armored and cavalry units took place at 05:40 on 17 September 1939. The operational method envisaged was a determined attack on a broad front followed by a deep division of the Polish defenses and their destruction in parts with the aim of wearing down the opposing Polish remnant troops with a lightning strike. In the course of 12 days the Red Army troops advanced about 250 to 350 km at an average attack speed of 21–29 km/day and reached the line Belostok – Brest – Lvov – Stryi. The total amount of forces and means used by all sides in the German-Polish-Russian war is shown in the following table:

Table I.2 Number of Forces and Assets Deployed	By Germany	By Poland	By Soviet Union	Number of Divisions	of which Armored Divisions	Number of Tanks	Number of Combat Aircraft
39	none	870 (with small tanks)	407 c.	73.5	3	1 PzK., 10 PzBr.	none data none data

As shown, such a powerful grouping of Soviet troops was formed on the border with Poland, which proves that the tasks of the troops were not only to "protect the brotherly Belarusian and Ukrainian people", but to crush the armed remnants of Poland and occupy the western territories of Belarus and Ukraine. Possibly, according to the created balance of forces, even a possible confrontation with the Wehrmacht was not excluded. This consideration is by no means absurd, as the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation stated in a 2006 publication, "...that some Soviet commanders could have imagined being allies of the Poles in the joint struggle against the Germans." ⁴ Since the Wehrmacht had already reached the above-mentioned line on September 16, 1939, the war could thus be considered won for Germany and only remnants of the Polish Army remained to be fought, the enormous use of force by the Red Army on September 17, 1939, can only be understood if one starts from the consideration that Stalin seemed willing not to avoid a confrontation with the Wehrmacht and to stop its further advance militarily if necessary. With the treaty of September 28, 1939 between the USSR and Germany, the western border of the USSR was bindingly fixed approximately at the Curzon Line recognized at that time by England, France, the USA and Poland. Thus, the USSR received an additional territory of 190,000 square kilometers of western Belarus and western Ukraine, advanced towards the west, with a population of 12 million people, including 6 million Ukrainians and 3 million Belarusians. The official Soviet historiography gave the following as reasons for carrying out the Polish

campaign: in the Polonization of the annexed western Belarusian and western Ukrainian territories by the Polish rulers (such as the closure of Ukrainian and Belarusian schools, the transformation of Orthodox places of worship into Catholic churches, the taking away of rightful land ownership and its transfer to Polish colonists); in the violent suppression by Poland's ruling circles of the growing national liberation movement of Ukrainians and Belarusians and their demand for annexation to the Soviet Belarusian and Ukrainian republics; in the preparation of a war of conquest against the Soviet Union by the reactionary Polish rulers as a last resort; in the concern for the safety of the Ukrainians and Belarusians residing in that part of Poland. It goes on to say, "It was a genuine liberation campaign; its aim was to liberate the population of western Ukraine and western Belarus and to prevent the fascists from advancing further east." 5 Today's presentation of these events in historiography proves their pliant adaptation to the spirit of the times and the falsification of historical events. Whereas as late as October 31, 1939, Molotov described the Polish campaign of the Red Army as a "blow" which, together with the thrust of the German troops, had led to the disintegration of the Polish state, that "freak of the Versailles Treaty," today it is said that "the towns and villages of the western Ukrainian and western Belorussian territories were now free from the danger of German occupation." 6 Immediately after the successful conclusion of the Polish campaign, as early as November 14, 1939, by means of Order No. 0177 of the USSR People's Commissar for Defense, the White Russian Front was transferred back to the White Russian Special Military District and the Ukrainian Front to the Kiev Special Military District, with the inclusion of the respective territories of Western White Russia and Western Ukraine. The cause of these actions, carried out with particular haste, can be seen in the shift of the center of gravity of military operations to the northern direction. November 30, 1939 – The USSR's aggression against Finland On November 17, 1939, the People's Commissar for Defense handed over to the Military Council of the Leningrad Military District Directive No. 0205/op on the preparation of aggression against Finland. The USSR's first war against Finland (November 30, 1939–March 13, 1940) was launched with the officially stated goal of averting the alleged threat to Leningrad posed by the Finnish Army, as well as preventing further provocations on the Soviet–Finnish border. However, the following excerpts from the directive of the General Staff of the Red Army to the Leningrad Military District of November 17, 1939, prove the real objective of this aggression:

Quote I.3 6 History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, Berlin 1962, p. 259. "1. On the outcome of the "X." Day 1939 to complete the concentration of the troops of the district in accordance with instructions given earlier and in cooperation with the Baltic Red Banner Fleet and the Northern Sea Fleet to be ready for a determined attack with the aim of destroying in the shortest possible time the opposing land forces and the naval fleet of the enemy. 2. at dawn of the 2nd day after "X" 1939 to proceed simultaneously with the troops of the land, air and naval forces to a determined attack with the tasks: a) of the 7th Army – ... concentrated on the Karelian Isthmus, to destroy with a mighty blow in cooperation with the air forces the troops of the enemy, to take possession of his fortified space on the Karelian Isthmus, to reach the front Priozersk–Antrea–Vyborg. The further task: in cooperation with parts of the 8th Army to develop the attack in the direction of Lahti–Hyvinkää–Helsinki. b) of the 8th Army –... concentrated in the area of Maselka–Vidlitza–Prjacha, with the main forces by a determined attack in the direction of Sortavala to destroy the opposing enemy, with the next task to reach the front Korpiselka–Vjartsilja–Sortavala. Further, in cooperation with the 7th Army to attack in the direction of Mikkeli, to secure its own right flank in the direction of Kuopio, to establish the connection with the 9th Army. c) the 9th Army –... while securing its own flanks, to destroy the enemy's troops, to act with the main forces in the direction of Kajani, with the next task to reach the front Kemijärvi, ST. Kantiomjoki and to take possession of Oulu in the shortest possible time. d) the 14th Army –... together

with the Northern Fleet to destroy the enemy's troops, to take possession of the Fisher and Sredni peninsulas and the Pecenga area, to simply fortify itself in this area and to ensure from the south, not to allow the supply of live force and armament from the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, but also the landing of landing troops on the coast of Murmansk. 3. tasks of the air forces a) with the aim of complete air domination of our air forces to destroy the enemy's air forces and airfields by simultaneous and concentrated strikes on established bases and airfields. b) with successive attacks on railroad nodes, bases and military-industrial objects to interrupt railroad transport and the work of defense and other important objects. ... 4. tasks of the naval fleet a) to destroy the enemy's navy. b) to blockade the ports of Finland, not to permit the resupply of troops and war equipment. d) to capture the islands of Gogland, Lawensaari, B. Tjumers, and Seskar. e) to prepare a landing detachment consisting of not less than one rifle regiment for setting down on the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland for a special mission of the High Command. ... (f) ... not to permit the access of international vessels or the landing of international troops in the Aeland Islands. ..."

The analysis of the operational tasks assigned to the Red Army troops and the naval fleet in the directive of November 17, 1939, reveals that the war aims of the Soviet Union's so-called Winter War went far beyond the above-mentioned account, still propagated today by conservative Russian historiography, of wanting to avert the threat to Leningrad and provocations on the borders with Finland. Obviously, the war against Finland was intended to: m to destroy with great determination the land, air, and naval forces and the fortified spaces of Finland, to take possession of large parts of Finnish territory, and to be able to exercise control over the whole of Finland by the capture of Helsinki; m to broaden the basis for unrestricted action by the Northern Fleet by seizing the port of Pecenga (Petsamo) and the Finnish parts of the Fishermen's and Sredni Peninsulas, and to secure permanently the strategically important railroad line to Murmansk; m to strengthen the naval supremacy of the Baltic Red Banner Fleet in the Finnish as well as in the Gulf of Bothnia and the eastern Baltic Sea by establishing bases from Finnish territory (e. g.e.g. Hanko Peninsula and other islands) and to prevent m the economic and military support of Finland and the armed forces, especially from the Norwegian port of Kirkenes and across the land and sea borders, by sealing the borders and cutting off existing communications. On November 29, 1939, the USSR government terminated the Soviet-Finnish nonaggression treaty and recalled its diplomatic representatives from Finland. On November 30, 1939, the provided troops of the Leningrad Military District began attacking Finland simultaneously in all ordered directions. On the same day, the Finnish government declared war. Map I.4 (cf. p. 30) The Soviet Union's claim that it had to eliminate a threat from Finland becomes a legend in the face of the Red Army's formidable superiority. After all, by the end of March 1940, the Red Army was able to create a force ratio of 6.5 to 1 in manpower, 14 to 1 in artillery, 20 to 1 in aircraft, and 56 to 1 in tanks against the Finnish Army on the Karelian Isthmus. 8 Despite the large nickel deposits present in the Petsamo area and also Finnish cellulose production (necessary for the manufacture of explosives), the territory of Finland, with its population of about 3.7 million (1940), was a vast deserted and difficult-to-pass space. Thus, it becomes clear that the war against Finland was waged primarily because of its extraordinary strategic importance as the northern flank of the planned theater of war. It was intended to create the desired apron in the northern area and to develop the northern flank as a deployment area as well as to create freedom of action for the Baltic Red Banner Fleet and the Northern Sea Fleet. The military strategic objective of the Winter War is also evidenced by the measures initiated immediately after the end of the war by the Red Army for the military use of the annexed terrain. As early as the summer of 1940, the expansion of a base of the Baltic Red Banner Fleet, the stationing of a special rifle brigade and a railroad gun battery, as well as a large number of special construction and engineer battalions, began on the Hanko Peninsula using the

harbor. 9 (See VI Chapter, Deployment, Stage I) Due to a whole range of different causes such as: m the inadequate preparation of the Red Army for warfare in polar conditions and for overcoming extended lines of defense;

- the stubborn, tenacious and brave resistance of the Finnish army, but also
- threatened political and economic sanctions to military strikes by a large number of countries, especially France, England and also the USA, the operational tasks set by the directive of 17 November 1939 were only partially achieved. On March 12, 1940, the USSR and Finland signed a peace treaty in Moscow, including an additional protocol, and ceased hostilities on March 13, 1940. With this treaty, the Soviet Union extorted from Finland a substantial terrain gain, far beyond the territory militarily occupied during the hostilities. Finland lost the entire Karelian Isthmus, the economically most developed area of Vyborg- Priozersk- Sortavala- Suorjarwi between Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega, as well as a considerable area of about 5,000 square kilometers in northern Finland. Likewise, the previously Finnish part of the Fischer and Sredni peninsulas had to be ceded and the Hanko peninsula with the adjacent islands leased to the Soviet Union for 30 years. Only the strategically important ice-free port of Pecenga with the nickel mines in this area was vacated by the Red Army when the treaty was concluded. Quite obviously, Stalin did not want to mess with Great Britain any more than was absolutely necessary, since the mining rights for the nickel deposits were in Canadian possession. Since the large cellulose plant was also initially awarded to Finland, it is proven that resource-strategic considerations played no role in the attack on Finland, even if at a later date the plant was still incorporated by a new enforced border demarcation. Postwar Soviet propaganda reduced the first Soviet-Finnish war (Winter War) mainly to the breakthrough through the Mannerheim Line. This was done in order to make credible the justification of the invasion of Finland as a necessary measure to eliminate the threat to Leningrad, but also to give a justification for the huge losses of the Red Army. Above all, it was possible to obscure the military strategic objective of this war to prepare the northern theater of war and to present it as a localized measure to increase the security of Leningrad. Official historiography gave as reasons for the conduct of the Finnish campaign: m the Finnish reaction, the most reactionary representatives of the bourgeoisie and the landowners, had entered into an alliance with the enemies of the Soviet Union, the French, English, American and German imperialists; m the visit of the Karelian Isthmus and the Mannerheim Line by English, Swedish and German military officers proved that Finland was to be developed on land and at sea as a deployment area against the Soviet Union; m furthermore, "The entrance into the Gulf of Finland ... unprotected, threatened the Soviet fleet stationed in the gulf. Murmansk, the Soviet Union's only ice-free port in the north, was also unprotected, for the Fishermen's and Sredni Peninsulas offshore from it belonged in part to Finland. "m In November 1939, anti-Soviet hysteria had been carried to extremes and the Finnish military clique had carried out provocative acts to the point of shelling Soviet troops near Leningrad. 10 A careful examination of Maps I.4 and I.6, however, shows that the objective of using the Winter War to create strategically favorable positions in the western theater of the war for a planned Red Army attack into Central Europe/Germany was not completely successful on the northern flank, since the war aims against Finland were only partially achieved. This view is confirmed particularly clearly in comparison with the gains in terrain achieved in June 1940 in the western direction by seizing the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as in Bessarabia and Bukovina.

17 June 1940 - Annexation of the Baltic States Interesting for assessing the character and objective of the action against the Baltic States is the wording in an official material of the Russian State Military Archives from 2007, in which the invasion of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia is called a "Baltic

campaign". The occupation was carried out in stages. The report of a special Foreign Office command on Estonia states, "By March 1940, ...some 40,000 Russian troops were already in the country." 11 That is, months before the start of the campaign. Since the transfer of large contingents of troops must already be regarded as the beginning of the Red Army's deployment, some details of this campaign have been dealt with in Chapter VI, Deployment, Stage I. As reasons for carrying out the Baltic campaign, the official historiography stated: m after the independence of the Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, recognized by Lenin by decree as early as December 1918, the achievements of Soviet power were violently smashed by troops of the Interveners and White Guards; m the republics created with the help of foreign bayonets actively participated in the campaign against revolutionary Russia and launched a series of anti-Soviet provocations; m because of their favorable strategic position, England, France and fascist Germany tried to extend their spheres of influence to the Baltic states; m the bourgeois Baltic governments became the plaything of foreign powers and declared their readiness to participate in a war of Germany against the USSR despite their proclaimed neutrality; m the anti-people policy of the ruling circles aggravated the internal contradictions in the Baltic countries; m the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian rulers began to sabotage the treaties concluded with the USSR, thus buying weapons and war materials in Germany; m there were provocations against Soviet garrisons in the Baltic countries. 12 On June 14, 1940, the USSR issued an ultimatum to the Lithuanian government and on June 16 to Latvia and Estonia. Red Army troops entered Lithuania on June 15 and Latvia and Estonia on June 17, 1940. June 28, 1940 – The campaign against Bessarabia and Bukovina The Bessarabian campaign of the Red Army is also dealt with in detail in Chapter VI, Deployment, Stage I, since it already fell into the period of the beginning deployment of the Red Army, but of course at the same time served to create the southern flank of the theater of war against Germany. As reasons for the implementation of the Bessarabian campaign the official historiography gave:

- the Romanian landowners and capitalists steered an anti-Soviet course;
- the ruling classes made the country a staging area for the anti-Soviet policy of the Western powers; m the most important parties of the Romanian ruling classes, the National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party, considered Romania as a base for a crusade against the USSR;
- the fascization of the country was actively promoted by the parties;
- since mid-April 1940, the Romanian reaction on the Romanian-Soviet border provoked a series of incidents;
- the policy of the Romanian government endangered the security of the southwestern borders of the USSR;
- The haste with which the ruling circles of Romania approached fascist Germany showed that the solution of the Bessarabian question would no longer tolerate any delay;
- the Soviet claim to cede Northern Bukovina was legitimate primarily because the people's will of Bukovina had already decided in November 1918 to reunite with Soviet Ukraine.

On the evening of June 26, 1940, the Soviet government delivered an ultimatum and on June 28, 1940, the Red Army began its "liberation campaign" in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

Late 1940/early 1941 – The second planned Soviet-Finnish war.

Stalin was by no means satisfied with the results of the Winter War. In his program, one unfulfilled point remained in northeastern Europe: Finland. After the successes in the Baltic states, the northern flank was to be finally secured by the annexation of the rest of Finland. As a result of the occupation of

Denmark and Norway by the Wehrmacht, beginning on 09 April 1940, with the surrender of Norway on 10 June 1940, the northern direction gained additional weight for Stalin. In the interest of strengthening the northern flank of the USSR, it was now imperative to revise the moderate results of the first war against Finland. For the conduct of another war of the USSR against Finland, an operational document, "Considerations on the deployment of the armed forces of the Red Army in the event of war with Finland," was submitted to Stalin and Molotov by the People's Commissar for Defense, S. Timoshenko, and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, K. Merezhkov, on September 18, 1940. The operational idea of this plan provided: Quote I.5 (cf. p. 34).

Quote I.5

"1. To reliably seal our borders during the concentration of troops; 2. To invade Central Finland by a blow from the Northwest Front via Savonlinna to Mikkeli and via Lappeenranta to Heinola, bypassing the fortifications laid out in the direction of Helsinki, and by a simultaneous blow from Vyborg via Simola against Helsinki, to smash the main forces of the Finnish Army and to take possession of the central part of Finland; To combine this blow with a strike against Helsinki from the Hanko Peninsula and with the action of the Baltic Fleet, decorated with the Order of the Red Banner, in the Gulf of Finland; 3. To strike simultaneously with the main blow of the northwestern front a blow in the direction of Rovaniemi -Kemi and on Oulu, in order, on reaching the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, to cut off northern Finland and sever the communications of central Finland with Sweden and Norway; 4. By active action in the north in the first days of the war, to take away from Finland the port of Pecenga and close the Norwegian land frontier in the Pecenga-Nautsi section."

14 This occupation would have given Stalin a completely free hand for the expansion of the northernmost flank as a deployment base against Germany. On 05 October 1940, the "considerations ..." presented were confirmed by Stalin. Nevertheless, Stalin did not want to risk international protests, as in the case of the Winter War. He wanted to be sure of Hitler's approval. It is therefore not surprising that the subject of Finland played such a prominent role in the talks between Molotov and Hitler in Berlin on November 12-13, 1940. Hitler, however, categorically rejected the waging of a second war by the Soviet Union against Finland, since his benevolent neutrality during the Winter War had already cost him dearly. 15 Despite Hitler's firm rejection of a second Finnish war by the Soviet Union in the talks with Molotov, on November 25, 1940, the People's Commissar for Defense issued the following instruction to the commander-in-chief of the Leningrad Military District: "I order to begin drawing up a plan for the operational deployment of the troops of the Northwest Front. ... The Military Council as well as the staff of the Leningrad Military District are charged with the task of drawing up the following plans in the General Staff of the Red Army by February 15, 1941..." 16 The war aims of the planned second Soviet-Finnish war were already broader. The Finnish question was now to be finally resolved.

Thus, the directive of November 25, 1940, specified as the main task: "The destruction of the armed forces of Finland, the seizure of control over its territory within the established perimeter, and the advance to the Gulf of Bothnia on the 45th day of the operation..." 17 By attacking Helsinki from three directions and capturing the capital, the plan was to break Finland not only militarily but also politically

and, following the example of the Baltic States and Bessarabia, to incorporate Finland into the Soviet Union as well. Due to the opening of the war by the Wehrmacht on June 22, 1941, the so-called "Continuation War" took place from June 25, 1941 as a part of the Soviet Union's military confrontation with Finland. The Soviet Union was thus deprived of the possibility of an early expansion of Finnish territory as a theater of war on its northern flank. 18 The following map I.6 gives an overall view of the territories conquered by the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1940 and illustrates the westward shift of its borders by about 250 to 300 km. It can also be seen that the terrain gained by the Soviet-Finnish war was relatively small. Map I.6 (cf. p. 36) The extent of the planned theater of war shown in this map was confirmed in Timoshenko's message of October 5, 1940, addressed to Stalin and Molotov, on the basis of which, following instructions from Stalin, the operational plan of September 18, 1940, was again specified. This message stated, "...To be used in connection therewith from the forces presently available: - for actions in the west (from the coast of the Barents Sea to the shore of the Black Sea) - 142 rifle, 7 motorized rifle, 16 armored and 10 cavalry divisions, 15 armored brigades and 159 aviation squadrons." 19 The manner in which the Red Army proceeded to carry out the land seizure, but in particular the time limits for the enforcement of rigorous political demands made until the Red Army invaded, are presented in the following table: Table I.7 (see p. 36) 20 As shown in this table, the Red Army generally acted in a raiding manner after covered partial mobilization and rapid concentration of attacking units. Economic, population, and power considerations aimed at expanding Sovietized space, as well as patriotic motives, may also have contributed to Stalin's decision to reconquer western Ukraine and western Belarus and to annex the Baltic states, as well as Bessarabia and Bukovina. However, Stalin's pronounced expansionist frenzy in the northwestern, western and southwestern directions cannot be explained in this way.

Table I.7	Polish Campaign	Winter War	Finland	Baltic Campaign	Lithuania	Baltic Campaign	Latvia,
	Estonia	Bessarabian Campaign	no known	documentable	preceding	claims	November 28, 1939
	Termination of Soviet-Finnish Nonaggression Treaty	June 14, 1940	Ultimatum to Lithuania	June 16, 1940	Ultimatum to Latvia and Estonia	June 26, 1939	June 1940 ultimatum to Latvia and Estonia
	June 26, 1940 ultimatum to Romania	September 17, 1939	Red Army attack begins	November 30, 1939	Red Army attack begins	June 15, 1940	Red Army moves in
	June 17, 1940	Red Army moves in	June 28, 1940	Red Army moves in	0 days	2 days	1 day
	1 day	2 days	20				

The multitude of different justifications for the Red Army's campaigns in 1939/1940 obviously included a colorful mixture of truths, partial truths and untruths, some of which were also self-created pretexts. Thus, the impression solidifies that the priority was the acquisition of the territories, their sovietization and their immediate military utilization. In the following, let us consider some strategically and operationally significant aspects of the creation of the theater of war advanced to the west. The strategic aspects of the creation of the theater of war Since Germany was at the center of all geostrategic planning of the supreme political and military leadership of the USSR, as was also regularly stated in all operational plans (see IX. Chapter, Operational Plans) of the General Staff of the Red Army, the buffer state Poland had to be eliminated first and a line of contact with the country of the main enemy had to be established, whereby at the same time the main battle area could be advanced 250 to 300 km to the west and a strategically extraordinarily favorable configuration of the border course could be created for an offensive. Moreover, the Red Army had come closer to the strategically valuable areas in Central Europe by these approximately 300 km. After the conquest of Finland, the winter war of 1939/1940 was to serve the securing of the northern flank as well as to facilitate the naval strategic planning for an entry of the Russian Northern Fleet into the North Sea and the North Atlantic. The

incorporation of the Baltic States secured the advance of the Baltic Red Banner Fleet into the eastern Baltic, and East Prussia, in particular, could now be directly threatened by the occupation of Lithuania. This strategic objective in the direction of the Baltic Sea, and Baltic exits was ultimately put forward by Molotov at his talks in November 1940. The incorporation of Bessarabia and Bukovina served to secure the flank in the south of the future theater of war, qualified the state of naval supremacy of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, secured access to the lower reaches of the Danube, and facilitated possible control of the Bosphorus. A glance at the map shows that this land grab reduced, possibly even eliminated, a flank threat to the Red Army for the planned thrust into Central Europe. The Operational Aspects of the Creation of the Theater of War The theater of war that was created formed the basis for the Soviet Union's operational conception for a war in the West, as evidenced by all the operational plans of the Red Army General Staff since 19 August 1940 (draft). While the partial successes achieved by the Red Army in the Finnish campaign did not significantly improve the use of the Northern Fleet's combat capabilities in the Barents Sea, the military buildup at Hanko, the Åland Islands, and the fleet bases gained through the Baltic campaign created exceptionally favorable conditions for naval operations by the Baltic Red Banner Fleet to achieve naval supremacy in the Gulf of Bothnia and the eastern Baltic Sea. Overall, the improved situation in the marginal seas created the possibility of conducting both independent operations of the USSR naval fleet and operations in cooperation with land forces, such as sea-landing operations in East Prussia.

The east-west extension of the bridgeheads of Belostok (about 160 km depth) and Lvov (about 100 km depth) reached far into the Generalgouvernement and could enable the concentration of strong Red Army forces already in great depth of the enemy territory. The special configuration of the salient favored the planning of pincer-like and simultaneous operations of the Western and Southwestern Fronts to enclose parts of the Wehrmacht (enclosure operations) in the Radom - Lublin area. In particular, the frontal advance from Lvov created ideal conditions for the Red Army's planned main thrust, a crescent cut in the direction of Krakow-Breslau-Berlin, and thus for the encirclement of further German troops deployed in the Generalgouvernement as well as in East Prussia and the detachment of German Wehrmacht units deployed in the Balkans. While the relatively well-developed German defense system in East Prussia would have made an offensive operation by the Red Army more difficult and argued more for a defensive operation of the Northwest Front in that direction, the less developed terrain in the south of the Generalgouvernement between the southern foothills of the Pripjet area and the northern edge of the Carpathians was considered favorable for conducting successive offensive operations into the depths of Germany. The westward shift of the border with Germany by these 250 to 300 km created the possibility of regrouping the air forces in the area close to the border (after construction of the required number of airfields) and subsequently of carrying out independent operations of the bomber forces in greater depth to the political, economic and armament centers of central Germany. Advancing the combat zone westward ensured the creation of forward operating bases to shorten supply lines to the troops. As a Danube riparian, operations by a quickly brought river flotilla up the Danube became possible. As explained here, the incorporation of the countries and territories in the northwest (in Finland with restrictions), west and southwest of the USSR resulted in a substantial improvement of strategic and operational possibilities for a possible war against Germany. Of extraordinary strategic importance to the Soviet Union were, of course, also the enormous war-economic possibilities of the expansion of this theater of war. Cutting off Germany from its sources of raw materials, vital to the war economy, was greatly facilitated by the USSR's land gains on the northern and southern flanks. Germany drew 50% of its ore requirements from Kiruna, Sweden, and

depended on oil from Ploesti, Romania. Of course, the use of all additional economic, human and military resources (e.g. a number of combat-strong divisions) of the annexed countries and parts of the country was also of extraordinary strategic importance for the USSR. This is also the view of M. V. Sakharov: "The westward advance of the Soviet border improved the strategic position of our country."

For the world public and its own population, this intention was propagandistically packaged in such acceptable slogans as "The expansion of the Soviet family of nations." According to the published documents, the Red Army, as well as local party and state organs, ordered energetic immediate measures for the military use of the new border strip advanced in the north, northwest, west and southwest directions. Decisive determinations on the concentrated expansion of the theater of war, differentiated according to the various directions of operation, were made on the basis of clarifications of the operational plan of September 18, 1940 by Stalin on October 5, 1940, according to the proposals of the USSR People's Commissar for Defense, S. Timoshenko. These proposals stated, "3. With the aim of further strengthening the forces, the People's Commissar for Defense: ... w) take immediate measures for the pioneering fortification of the northern and northwestern borders, in order to further release forces for the reinforcement of the main southwestern grouping at the expense of the reliable fortifications created; g) in the preparation of the theater of war in the southwest, direct the main attention to the development of railroads and airfields; ..." 23 With the confirmation of Timoshenko's above-mentioned proposals on 05 October 1940, Stalin finally established the southwest direction as the main direction for the deployment of shock armies and the conduct of an offensive ("development of railroads and airfields") and the north and northwest directions for the conduct of initially defensive actions ("measures for the pioneering fortification of the northern and northwestern frontiers"). The following features characterized the infrastructural and pioneer development of the captured territories, which began immediately in the interests of the Red Army: m Utilization of all existing infrastructural elements, some of them the most primitive, due to the retention in the new border areas gained by a large part of the formations and units involved in the war against Poland, the aggression against Finland, the occupation of the Baltic States as well as Bessarabia and Bukovina, as well as by other forward deployed units; m Capture of a number of formations and units as well as their objects and facilities, especially in the attached Baltic States, and their incorporation into the Red Army; m creation of a network of wartime commands for the immediate registration of all personnel and militarily significant material and technical resources of the new areas and their preparation for rapid mobilization; m Construction of various military objects, such as runways of the planned airfields, bunkers of the fortified spaces, camps, roads, bridges, paths, railways, unloading platforms, water intake points, repair bases and other facilities of military purpose; m Transfer of residential and farm/stable buildings, barns, cattle yards of sovkhozes and kolkhozes to the Red Army for the quartering of troops; m Confiscation of land and forest into a so called "State Land Fund" for use by the Red Army. m requisitioning of any buildings that are suitable in terms of type, location and transport connections for the accommodation of troops, command posts, rear security facilities such as camps, workshops or military hospitals, etc., e.g. castles, former monasteries, former monastery buildings, etc., m requisitioning of land and forest for a so-called "state land fund" for use for the construction of objects for military purposes, for airfields, as training and shooting ranges. m the conscription of hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants, tens of thousands of horse-drawn vehicles and the requisitioning of motor vehicles and construction machinery of all kinds for the implementation of military construction projects; for the short-term implementation of the construction of railroad lines alone, 128,000 people were deployed in February 1941 in the border strip of the White Mountains. 000 people in the border strips of the Byelorussian and Kiev Special Military Districts. m Conversion of local industries and trades to the production of materials required

for pioneer construction and their obligation to deliver the necessary masses immediately, setting aside all civilian needs; m Provision of enormous financial resources intended exclusively for military purposes; m Use of the new spaces for planning and conducting troop exercises up to and including frontal assault operations with the aim of learning about and testing the expanded theater of war. 24 The focus of all operations, according to Stalin's above-mentioned directive of 05 October 1940, can be seen in the strategic directions southwest and west. The objects requisitioned for the accommodation of troops and facilities could be determined according to their location on the basis of the evaluated documents up to a depth of about 250 to 300 km from the new border line. The characteristic procedure was the short notice of the deadlines for the realization of the set tasks and the uncompromisingness of their enforcement, even if by far not all projects specified in the most diverse directives and instructions could be realized. The construction of airfields The westward shift of the borders by about 250 to 300 km resulting from the annexation of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus as well as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was intended, among other things, to achieve an adequate increase in the radius of action of the Red Army's air forces. However, the situation was extraordinarily unfavorable for the development of the air force groupings close to the border. Although there were 95 permanent airfields and 382 operational airfields in the western military districts, there were almost no airfields in a strip about 120 to 250 km east of the new border (between the Vilnius and Minsk meridians). As a result, the construction of new airfields began as early as 1939. As the following table shows, the initial plan was to build 135 more airfields by the first quarter of 1941. The total number of 612 airfields was to be reached. Then, however, it was intended to build another 143 airfields by the middle of 1941, bringing the total number of airfields in the Western Military Districts to 755.

Table I.8

Existing airfields	Airfields under construction	Total	Airfields of permanent base	Operational airfields
Completion scheduled by I quarter 1941	Completion scheduled by mid-1941			
Leningrad Military District 21 68 1 11 10125	Baltic Special Military District 17 - 49 - 66	Western Special Military District 29 141 16 39 225	Kiev Special Military District 19 81 56 88 244	Odessa Military District 9 92 13 5 119
Total 95	382	135	26	143 27 755

As highlighted in Table I.8, the Headquarters of the Air Forces planned to build 144 new airfields in the southwestern direction. Already at a meeting between Stalin and Lieutenant General Rychagov on November 29, 1940, the latter noted with satisfaction that the construction of the largest number of airfields was planned in the Kiev Special Military District, that is, in the southwest direction. As Rychagov further reported, the overwhelming majority of the airfields to be built, as already confirmed by Stalin, were to come to within a maximum of the border. Some even to a distance of up to one kilometer. 28

Also in the Western Special Military District, all the airfields to be newly built were planned in the zone close to the border. Thus, in the Western Special Military District, 15 to 16 airfields, intended to accommodate the main air forces of the Western Special Military District but also as storage sites of aircraft equipment of the air force units, were built in the immediate vicinity of the state border at a distance of 10 to 40 km. 29 As an example, the Andsheevo airfield in the Belostok border promontory, 9 km northwest of Chizhov, was built 12 km from the state border. 30 Thus, at an average speed of 400 km/h, Luftwaffe bombers from the border required an approach time of 1.5 to 6 min to the airfields of

the Red Army Air Forces located near the border. As the arrested Army General D. G. Pavlov, former commander-in-chief of the Western Front, stated during his interrogation, the Minsk Air Observation Center (WNOS- Point for Air Observation, Warning, News) received the message about the approach of German planes only 4 min after crossing the border. 31 This running time of the message already corresponds to a penetration depth of about 27 km. As the Chief of the General Staff, K. A. Merezhkov, reported to the People's Commissar for Defense, S. K. Timoshenko, on August 17, 1940, on-duty chains were deployed at all airfields, but their takeoff times after sounding the alarm ranged from 5 min (JG-21 of the Baltic Special Military District in Riga) to 7 min (JG-41 of the Western Special Military District in Belostok). 32 The reaction time of the fighter chains on duty was thus at least 9 min. A comparison with the Luftwaffe approach times of about 1.5 to about 6 min. to the forward airfields of the Red Army air forces gives a negative time balance of 3 to 6.5 min. Up to a distance of the airfields from the border of up to about 12 to 14 km, even firing by long-range artillery of the Wehrmacht was possible. 33 With such a proximity of the airfields to the border, there could be no question of effective defense of the airfields in the event of a surprise attack by the Wehrmacht or of evading the air forces from the blows of the German Luftwaffe, or even of launching the fighter planes in time to carry out the air combat. Moreover, it must have been clear to those responsible that even if the attacking Wehrmacht had only minor initial successes, the airfields located in the border strip and all the supplies and reserves accumulated there would be lost. But this proximity of the air force stationing to the border is completely consistent with the Red Army's attack doctrine. Of course, some of the planned airfields in the strip close to the border, especially those of the main basing, but also some operational airfields with concrete runways, were built. This was especially the case on those airfields that were intended for the stationing of new types of aircraft. It is precisely this fact that has recently attracted the attention of Stalinist apologists. Thus A. Bushkov in his work about Stalin still writes in 2009: "The take-off and landing strip is concreted for this purpose, in order not to be dependent on the whims of an unfavorable nature. So that the airplanes can take off without help even when the earth is softened after autumn long rains. If the runways were concreted, it means that the Soviet air forces intended to remain on these airfields, as a minimum, until the winter of 1941. i.e., no attack of any kind was planned on Germany in the summer period, no attack without air forces." 34 This statement regarding the necessity of upgrading the airfields with concrete runways in extreme weather conditions is correct at first, but the conclusion derived from it regarding the timing of the Red Army's attack seems more than childish. On the basis of a directive of the Council of People's Commissars and the CC of the CP(B) of the USSR of March 24, 1941, the Council of People's Commissars and the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus, in a directive of April 01, 1941, now laid down extraordinary measures to ensure the construction of airfields in the border zone within the ordered deadlines. These measures included, among other things, the extension of the usual working hours of workers on airfield construction by 4 hours a day, the immediate confiscation of the number of construction machines and means of transport required for airfield construction from the municipal and road construction departments, the priority provision of transport for workers and materials by the railroads, the obligation of civilian industry to deliver the planned construction materials in full and on time, strict supervision of the construction process. 35 According to the documents, the new construction of such a large number of airfields was not easily realized within the short deadlines ordered. For example, the 3rd Administration of the People's Commissar for Defense states in a briefing dated April 16, 1941, "There were a number of serious deficiencies in the work of the airfield construction department on the construction of operational airfields in 1940, which had a negative impact on the work schedule." 36 Because of construction delays, the Military Council of the Western Special Military District, in an admonitory letter of April 28, 1941, to the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Byelorussian Soviet Republic, had already

urged that the construction of nine airfields (the deadline was the I quarter of 1941) now be finally completed by June 15, 1941. 37 According to a report by the Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus dated June 7, 1941, 87,000 workers and up to 75,000 teams were involved in airfield construction in the Belarusian Soviet Republic alone.

Since the General Staff and the commanders of the Red Army can by no means be accused of ignorance regarding the tactically expedient distances of the airfield bases from the border line, it must be concluded that the grouping of the air forces of the Red Army was deployed to ensure an offensive. It goes without saying that the deployment of air forces close to the front line is advantageous in terms of space and time, especially in the case of offensive actions. The fulfillment of such tasks of the air forces of the Red Army, specified in the operational plan of September 18, 1940, as: "joint actions with ground forces against the enemy's battle formations", "combat with the enemy's air forces", "prevention of troop transports to concentration" require the early introduction of air forces into the battle already in the depth of the enemy's battle formation without a long approach. Also, the task given to long-range bomber forces of conducting "strikes on military-industrial objects of the enemy" can be accomplished when airfields are located near the front at greater depths of the enemy's territory. 39 The accumulation of material resources and reserves for the rearward securing of the combat operations of the Red Army air forces also took place primarily at the airfields located in the immediate border strip. Thus, at about 30 airfields of the Western Special Military District located in the border strip, such quantities of aircraft fuel and aerial bombs were accumulated that the remaining airfields located at greater depth no longer had sufficient reserves. This also explains why, due to the rapid capture or destruction of the airfields near the border by the Wehrmacht, further combat operations by the remaining air forces of the military district could hardly be ensured. The destruction of parts of the grouping in the event of preventive action by the Wehrmacht, for which, however, there were fears only from about the middle of May 1941, was obviously accepted with approval. The expansion of the railroad network In 1940, railroad transportation provided 85.1% of all transportation services (sea and river transport – 12.3%, pipelines – 0.79%, air transport – 0.01%) of the USSR. Thus, it was the decisive mode of transportation for the Red Army's deployment. As early as July 12, 1940, Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov had the People's Commissar for Defense, Timoshenko, report the state of preparation of the railroad network and its passability in the western areas of the border military districts with the aim of immediately changing its condition. And not without reason. While the railroad lines of Germany, Hungary and Romania leading to the USSR border had the capacity to handle 861 pairs of trains a day, i.e. 9 to 11 infantry divisions a day, the railroad network of the USSR up to the old border had the capacity to handle 678 pairs of trains a day.

However, only 367 train pairs were possible in the areas of western Belarus and western Ukraine. However, according to the instructions of the People's Commissar for Defense, the elaboration of the plan diagram of military transfers for 1941 was to be based on 310 train pairs per day in the ordered main directions alone, which corresponded to the approach of 5 to 6 rifle divisions per day. It becomes clear that the greatest attention had to be paid to further increasing the transportation capacity of the railroads with the aim of achieving greater operational capability for the Red Army's advance. Almost all the railroad lines mentioned in the documents of July 12, 1940 and planned for expansion in 1940 and 1941 (new constructions, second tracks, relay lines, supply points) run in the direction of the balconies, thus testifying to the main directions of west and southwest. The following table illustrates the passability of the railroad network of all western border military districts by the end of 1940 and the planned expansion of the network in 1941 in comparison with the passability of the railroad network of the western countries:

Table I.9

Railroad network passability in pairs of trains	Until the end of 1940	With the completion of the expansion planned for the year 1941	Approaching network from the side of the Western countries
Baltic Special Military District	87	216	192
Western Special Military District	120	166	216
Kiev Special Military District	132	266	362
Odessa Military District	28	96	

As can be seen from Table I.9, more attention was paid to the development of the railroad network in Ukraine than in Belarus. It is obvious that the enormous increase of the railroad network passability in the strip of the Kiev Special Military District by 100% is to be seen in connection with the transfer of the main direction from the west to the southwest direction in accordance with the instructions issued by Stalin on October 05, 1940, for the preparation of the operational plan of September 18, 1940, while the passability of the railroad network in the west direction was to be increased by only about 40%. This message states that "(g) in the preparation of the theater of war in the southwest, the main attention should be directed to the development of railroads and the construction of airfields." 41 In evaluating a field exercise of the front in the strip of the Western Special Military District near the border on the subject of "The Attack Operation of the Front with Breakthrough of a Strongly Fortified Field Defense of the Enemy" in the period from 15 to 22. In the course of the evaluation of the Western Special Military District on October 15–22, 1940, in particular on the doctrinal issue "Creation of the necessary grouping of troops in the decisive direction", the commander of the Western Special Military District, D. G. Pavlov, as well as the head of the Western Department of the Operational Administration of the General Staff of the Red Army, on November 21, 1940, noted major deficiencies in the transport security of troops. In the evaluation of the General Staff it says: "7. About the theater of war: a) The railroad network is weakly developed, with low passability, which in no way satisfies the requirements of the front. It is necessary to perfect and develop the railroads, to raise their passability to the level existing eastward of Minsk; b) Very poorly developed are the railroad stations, which makes it difficult to create supply stations and reserves in them; c) The lack of a sufficient number of roads and highways made it difficult to bring in reserves and means of material securing." 42 The unloading of troop transports in the event of the Red Army's deployment and concentration was to be secured by approximately 380 unloading points, 50% of which, however, did not meet military requirements in terms of size and basic fortification. The distribution of the troop unloading points planned for reconstruction or new construction is shown in the following table:

Table I.10

Military district	Railway region	Number of troop unloading points to be reconstructed or newly built
Western Special Military District	Belostok Railways	17
	Brest-Litovsk Railways	50
Kiev Special Military District	Kovelsk Railways	26
	Lvov Railways	

Thus, a concentration of the planned troop unloading points in the west direction and in the southwest direction in the front balconies or in the direction of the front balconies, respectively, can be recognized. It cannot be ruled out that the planning of military unloading points reported in July 1940 was initially intended to prepare for the planned campaign in East Prussia. After all, 93 unloading points (including Kowel as a centrally located railroad junction) were planned in the northern and western areas, whereas only 76 unloading points were planned in the southwestern direction. In the frontal balcony of

Belostok, the unloading points planned for reconstruction were located in the immediate vicinity of the border (Brest- 10 km, Avgustov- 12 km, Graewo- 15 km, Cheremcha- 28 km). As sketch I.11 shows, in the southwestern direction the construction of 34 military unloading points was given priority in the frontal balcony of Lvov in the triangle Lvov- Sambor-loading points, for example, on the railroad line Lvov-Rava-Russkaya, were not more than 10 km from the border. Sketch I.11 43 The coverage of the unloading areas and points in the frontal balcony of Lvov by a total of six air divisions with about 17 fighter squadrons (Sketch I.11) testifies to the high strategic importance of this main southwestern direction for the success of the planned campaign. However, in an NKVD information of January 17, 1941, addressed to Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich, the People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, L. Beriia, points out a number of shortcomings in the mobilization preparation of the rail transport. What is interesting about this report is the fact that, again, only the railroads of the areas around Brest, Belostok, Kovel and Lvov were considered. On February 14, 1941, the Central Committee of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR issued the directive "On the Plan of Railway Construction on the Southwest, West and Northwest Routes and on Ensuring Its Fulfillment," once again pointing out the particular urgency of developing railroad connections in the above-mentioned directions.

The directive states, "...the most important task of railroad construction in 1941 is to increase the capacity of the south-western, western and north-western lines of the USSR...". In the above-mentioned directive, it was ordered to double-track the specified lines in the above-mentioned directions in order to increase the capacity of the main lines. Thus, among other things, the Belarusian Special Military District was ordered to increase the throughput capacity of the Bologoe - Molodechno - Cheremcha railroad line and further in the direction of Belostok to 36 train pairs and the Kalinkovich - Mikashevichi - Shabinka line (eastward to Brest) to 30 train pairs by adding a second track. But the construction of new lines was also ordered, such as the line Timkovichi - Baranovichi (70 km) with exit in the direction of Belostok for temporary use or as a feeder the line Lepel - Krulevstchisna (65 km). The Moscow - Negoreloe line (350 km) was to be reconstructed. All these routes have in common to lead from the northeast and east directions to the Belostok frontal balcony. Special construction measures were specified by the directive for the Baranovichi, Minsk and Belostok railroad nodes. Railroad supply and safety facilities were to be created there, such as hump yards, wagon sorting facilities, repair bases, depots, water supply points, and electric stations. 44 Attention must be drawn to the abundance of railroad facilities in the Molodechno - Olechnovichi - Negoreloe area (west of Minsk). A huge effort was ordered to perfect the railroad network for military use. The 64,000 workers to be provided within the shortest period of one month (from March 15, 1941) (from April 1, 1941 128,000 workers) illustrate the importance assigned to this line construction with a clearly military purpose. The directive itself, signed by Stalin and Molotov, refers to the " ...fulfillment of the ordered plan on railroad expansion as the most important work for the defense of the country." 45 The construction or reconstruction of castling lines was not mentioned in the message to Stalin of July 12, 1940, nor was the expansion of castling lines ordered in the directive of February 14, 1941. In his letter of April 28, 1941, Army General Pavlov draws attention to insufficient progress in railroad line construction. Thus, he says, only 47% of the tasks set for 1940 have been accomplished, and the general accomplishment in the months of January to April 1941 is only 5 to 7%. It says: "The western railroad line - the laying of the second track Minsk- Radoshkovichi was not started. On the Polotsk-Bigozovo section for laying the second rail line in 1941 only 6% of the budgeted funds were used, on the Minsk railroad junction instead of the planned 1500 workers only 300 people work, the main works on the construction of the bypass line were not started. The Belostok railroad line - the construction of the 10

military platforms started in 1940 is not completed, as of April 01, 1941 the volume of the work completed in 15 months is only 50%.

The Brest railroad line – the volume of fulfilled work on the construction of 9 military platforms, begun in 1940, amounted to 55% as of 01 April 1941." In the end, Army General Pavlov notes that such a situation on the rail lines makes troop transport in the event of mobilization extremely difficult and, in the interest of completing the main rail lines ordered for expansion in the directive of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the CC of the CP(B), asks for the allocation of another 1,800 labor conscripts each for 4 months for the immediate completion of the strategically important sections of the Oranchizy-Belovesh and Timkovichi-Lyakhovichi. The latest completion dates for the fulfillment of nearly all tasks (Table I.19) are given as 01 June and 01 July 1941, respectively. 46 However, the density of the railroad network of the western countries could not ensure this schedule, nor was the plan only partially fulfilled. The Fortified Spaces In the early prewar plans of the Red Army buildup, the Fortified Spaces played a significant role. They were intended to protect the main operational directions and spaces, on the preservation of which depended the steadfastness of the defense, as well as to ensure the conduct of counterattacks and the transition of troops to the attack. Based on these considerations, in the pioneer development of the prospective theater of war, great attention was initially paid to the construction of the fortifications of the Fortified Spaces. The "Stalin Line" In the years 1928 to 1937, 13 fortified spaces were built along the old western border at immediate tactical depth, the so-called "Stalin Line", which was considered impregnable. The frontal width of the fortified spaces was 80 to 90 km, some even up to 200 km, but the depth was only 1 to 3 km, fewer spaces up to 5 km. However, there were a number of shortcomings. For example, the design of the spaces was based on topographic maps dating from 1909 to 1913, many fortifications, especially in the years 1931 to 1936, were built of low-quality concrete, some even without steel reinforcement. Some walls were built too thin (only 15 cm). As a result, the main repair or reconstruction of the fortifications had to begin immediately after their completion. 47 Due to the wrong selection of many emplacements, the free field of fire was often only 50 to 100 m due to the relief of the terrain. Thus, out of 257 fortifications of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, restrictions due to hills, mountains, forests and bushes lying in the field of fire were found in 175 installations. To eliminate these restrictions, about 300,000 m³ of earth would have had to be moved or 500 ha of forest or bushes would have had to be cut down for each fortified area.

Although orders were issued to remedy the deficiencies, but apparently without emphasis, the condition was not changed until the beginning of the war. That this was the case was confirmed by a prisoner of war, the German engineer lieutenant Behm, who took part in the storming of the "Stalin Line". Here are excerpts from the shorthand of his interrogation:

Quote I.12

"Our company had the task of blocking and blowing up concrete fortifications on the old border of Soviet Russia. ... We had a very good training and were prepared to act in the stock of mobile groups with the armored troops. ... But we could not accomplish our task, because instead of a mighty line of fortifications, which we expected to hit, ... we found only isolated neglected concreted installations, in some places unfinished ... Those fire points, from which we received machine gun fire, we easily bypassed, taking advantage of the terrain unevenness ... We could not understand for a long time that this was the most impregnable line of the old frontier ..."

The new fortified areas of the "Molotov Line" One of the decisive conclusions in the evaluation of the Winter War against Finland consisted in the more intensive training of the troops to overcome fortified defense lines, under the impression of the high steadfastness of the Mannerheim Line, but also with regard to the pioneering development of the intended theater of war. An essential role in the expansion of the western theater of war was to be played by the fortified spaces, the so-called "Molotov Line", along the new western border. Thus, it was planned to rebuild 11 Fortified Spaces along the new border in 1940, to which another 9 Fortified Spaces were to be added in 1941, initially with the aim of creating a real defense line. These Fortified Spaces were to be built according to a new system. In each space, two fortified lines with a general depth of about 15 to 20 km were foreseen. The fortified space was to consist of resistance nodes and these were to consist of support points. The resistance nodes and support points of the first line were to be developed first. The new fortified spaces were to be developed within a period of 10 months, apparently starting in early 1940. However, the expansion of the new Molotov Line was pushed forward with varying intensity and quality, was beset with problems and shortcomings, and took an inconsistent course. Because there were delays (reconnaissance and planning only in May 1940) the deadline for completion was reduced to a period of 5 months. In the Belostok frontal balcony, a whole series of fortified rooms, the Grodnoer, Osowetzker, Sambrowsker and the Brester, were rebuilt in 1940. Assuming that this construction work on the facilities of the new Fortified Spaces was to begin with high intensity in the spring of 1940, P.K. Ponomarev also gave field fortifications through the rifle troops, especially in the Baltic Special Military District. 50 However, there were probably different views between the state and party organs of Belarus, on the one hand, and the General Staff of the Red Army, on the other, about the character of the military expansion of the spaces near the border. One of the arguments presented by P. K. Ponomarenko to Stalin makes one sit up and take notice, the Chief of the German General Staff, von Schlieffen, had also reconnoitered the suitability of the terrain on the border with France not only as a bridgehead for the attack, but also from the point of view of defense. 51 Obviously, however, this was done by the General Staff of the Red Army. Beginning in the spring/summer of 1940, there were initial considerations by the inner circle around Stalin to intervene in the war and, after the annexation of the Baltic States and parts of Romania, to militarily crush East Prussia initially in accordance with the then unconfirmed draft operational plan of August 1940. Serious contradictions regarding the development of the new fortified areas also existed between the General Staff and the Red Army Pioneer Administration. Thus, a written information of the Pioneer Administration of the Red Army about the progress of the defense expansion in the 1st half of 1940, dated July 13, 1940, states: "In connection with discrepancies in planning between the 9th Division of the General Staff and the 1. Abteilung der Pionierverwaltung der Roten Armee and the examination and confirmation of the plan of the expansion, but also its modification in the course of the expansion with transfer of individual construction projects and sections to new spaces ... and especially in connection with late reconnaissances - in the months of May/June - severe conditions arose ..." 52 Then, on 08 March 1941, the removal of responsibility for the construction of the Fortified Spaces from the Red Army Main Pioneer Administration to the direct subordination of Marshal of the Soviet Union Shaposhnikov also took place. 53 Obviously, the changed approach of the General Staff to the military expansion of the new spaces is already visible here. While the western border republics were still trying to maintain a steadfast national defense, the General Staff was already thinking in terms of planning offensive actions and considered the expansion of the border strip for defense only as a mandatory peripheral task in selected directions. These considerations initially culminated in the operational plan of September 18, 1940. According to this plan, and especially according to Stalin's directives of October 5, 1940, defensive actions were planned only in the northwestern direction, and the importance of the fortified areas was reduced to the task of generally securing mobilization, concentration and deployment

of the Red Army. But this was at first only the view of Stalin and some insiders. This intention was not yet evident in the military districts, which believed in the preparation of defensive actions, as reports from the representatives of the military district and the party leadership of the Soviet Republic show. The following table on the distribution of financial resources for 1941 provides information on the priorities set by the top political and military leadership for the development of the fortified areas on the new border: Table I.13 54 The reasons for distributing the funds asymmetrically and concentrating them on the expansion of the fortified areas of the Baltic Special Military District, as shown, can clearly be traced back to an instruction issued by Stalin to the USSR People's Commissar for Defense on October 5, 1940, "... to immediately initiate measures for the pioneer expansion of the fortifications of the northern and northwestern borders, in order to further free up forces for the reinforcement of the main grouping in the southwestern direction through these created secure fortifications." 55 The intention to defend in the northwestern direction and to attack in the main southwestern direction, also determined by Stalin, in accordance with the operational plans of September 18, 1940, March 11, 1941, and May 15, 1941, can hardly be stated more clearly. Thus, the General Staff was not unwilling or averse to good proposals, but was already engaged in strategic offensive tasks from the summer of 1940. The following excerpts from a joint investigation report of the People's Commissar for Defense and the CC of the CP(B) of the USSR from April/May 1941 illuminate the catastrophic conditions in the fortified areas, which testify to deliberate omission: Quote I.14 (cf. p. 54) At least, however, these investigations prove that quasi at the last minute it was feared that the Wehrmacht might forestall its own planned attack and can be taken as evidence of the double strategy that had set in. Since the geographic shape of the Belostok frontal salient virtually challenged deep flank thrusts and the closing of the pincers in the Volkovysk-Baranovichi area by an enemy, thus posing the danger of cutting off the 3rd and 4th Armies, and possibly even the 10th Army in the case of deep thrusts, the reinforcement of the flanks was an urgent requirement. The Military Council of the Military District had proposed to the General Staff in the course of about 8 months, during several lectures and operational works, that the

Quote I.14

"1. the established measures for the construction and modernization of the fortifications of the old state border were not carried out at the present time due to the necessity of completing the construction works of the fortifications on the new state border by July 01, 1941, but they will be continued within the mentioned period ... 2. the garrisons of the fortified areas are not secured with cadres at the present time. The average replenishment of the garrisons does not exceed 30% of the staffing plan (13 to 20% in real terms) and cannot be increased in view of the lack of rearward security and without accommodation facilities. The staffing plan of the MG battalions does not correspond to the tasks of defending the fortifications, so that in some cases only 60% of the firing installations can be covered. 3. notwithstanding that to reinforce the armament of the fortified areas in the years 1938 to 1940 a large number of artillery was provided, a large part of which consisted of obsolete field guns of the years 1877 to 1895 without special mounts and without ammunition. Of comparable modern artillery, only twenty-six Model 1902 76-mm guns and eight Model 1902/30 76-mm field guns were given to the garrisons of the fortified areas. Of 140 L-17 guns ordered, 8 were handed over. The guns that were fixed were not completed. The condition of the mechanisms was such that fire could not be conducted from them. Forms for these guns do not exist. Spare parts kits have been lost. Due care of the guns is lacking. 4. half of the gunnery armament of the fortified fire points consists of machine guns of obsolete design and international brands, for which ammunition is often lacking. 5. tank battalions and tank companies

in support of the fortified spaces exist only in reports, have an obsolete 1929 to 1933 material section with fully depleted resources, no MG armament, and can be used to a limited extent only as nonmobile fire points to cover narrow and narrow passages. Fuel for the tank support companies is nowhere to be found. 6. notwithstanding the repeated instructions on the necessary re-equipment of the covered gun and machine-gun towers, for which more than 300 T-18 and T-26 tanks were handed over to the engineer administration, not a single emplacement has been erected up to the present time, but the tank towers are intended to be buried in the ground, sometimes carelessly concreted in. Systems of securing in such tank towers are absent. Some of the handed over tanks have been lost or given to the scrap material."

To strengthen the flanks of the military district from the north in the direction of Grodno and from the south in the direction of Brest. The General Staff rejected these proposals for about 6 to 7 months. Only recently the General Staff allowed to concentrate at the roots of the flanks 2 rifle divisions each in the Grodno direction (56th and 85th SchD.) and in the Brest direction (75th and later still the 113th SchD.). These divisions took up their positions at the end of May/beginning of June 1941. Furthermore, the General Staff was told of the need to secure the right and left flanks of the Belostok frontal salient by building additional fortified defenses. These proposals were equally rejected and only in the first decade month of June 1941 allowed to expand another two defensive nodes. Also, with the exception of the Karelian Fortified Area in the direction of Finland and of three Fortified Areas on the border with Romania, the garrisons of the Fortified Areas, which had hitherto been run independently, were placed under the control of the advancing rifle divisions in the entire western direction. 57 From about the middle of May 1941, in view of the now recognized advance, the Red Army General Staff became increasingly apprehensive that the Wehrmacht might pre-emptively advance. It authorized the implementation of measures to reinforce the flanks of the frontal salient (see VI Chapter, Deployment and IX Chapter, Operational Plans). In the directive of April 14, 1941, the General Staff of the Red Army stipulated that machine guns be temporarily stationed on field mounts in permanent fire installations in the absence of appropriate special armament. By decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of May 20, 1941, it was determined to transfer to the Fortified Areas 4,500 machine guns of the "Maxim" type on field mounts, and by decision of June 16, 1941, to transfer to the Fortified Areas another 2,000 of these machine guns from the mobilization reserve of the Far Eastern Front. 58 Under "VIII. Pioneer Preparation of the War Theater of the Kiev Special Military District" of the written communication on the plan of defense in the period of mobilization, concentration, and deployment of the troops of the Kiev Special Military District in 1941 from the end of May/beginning of June 1941, it was stated: "Notwithstanding the main defense strip near the border, established in peacetime and reinforced from the first day of mobilization, the following will be created on the territory of the Kiev Special Military District up to the Dnieper River from the first day of mobilization: from west to east, five rear defense sections; from southwest to northeast, three rear defense sections." 59 That is, a defense system staggered in depth in the southwestern direction, with the exception of the main defense strip near the border, was not to be developed at an early stage, but was apparently to be created only when needed after mobilization was triggered. On June 13, 1941, the Western Special Military District reported to the Supreme Military Council that as of June 10, 1941, 550 bunkers had been concreted in the district, but of these only 193 were structurally armed. According to a July 19, 1941, report by A.J. Fominych, a former member of the Military Council of the Western Special Military District, further expansion of the defensive line in the Western Special Military District was deliberately neglected. He reported: "With this plan (plan of the construction of

the Molotov Line – the author) I went twice to Moscow to the assistant of the Commander of the Fortified Areas, Comrade Mikhailin, and each time a confirmation was refused and justified by the fact that the industry does not manage to deliver building materials and armament, i.e., it was an attempt to artificially delay the construction" and further:

"Vital questions concerning the defense of the frontier were decided unusually slowly in the General Staff, but were sometimes rejected on the ground of the impossibility of their fulfillment by industry." 60 At the beginning of the war in June 1941, the Red Army had 2,500 permanent fire installations in the fortified areas, of which about 1,000 received artillery armament, the rest only machine guns. Only about 30% of the extent of the new frontier had been developed with reinforced concrete bunkers. In total, at the beginning of the war, the Red Army had 44 fortified areas, 2 of which were without command and 17 filled up only with the cadres. A superficial reading of the above must give the impression that the construction and maintenance of the Stalin and Molotov lines was extraordinarily sloppy. At least with regard to the maintenance of the Stalin Line and the completion of the Molotov Line as well as its transfer to combat readiness, even according to the opinion of the above-mentioned witnesses, the intent of neglect becomes apparent. The truth is, the Fortified Spaces were simply no longer needed in the attack operations defined by Stalin on 05 October 1940 and planned in the west and southwest directions. Their limited task of providing security for the Red Army's deployment could certainly be accomplished with minimal forces, but they were unsuitable for carrying out the Red Army's defensive actions supposedly planned initially with the beginning of a war. A number of serious efforts to arm the fortified points quickly, to close gaps (e.g., at the roots of the Belostok frontal salient), or to replenish the crews of the fortified areas in the months of May/June 1941 came hopelessly too late and can probably be classified as part of the Red Army's double strategy that began in the last weeks before the start of the war against a possible preemptive strike by the Wehrmacht (cf. the further chapters). It is also proven by a multitude of fortified lines (Westwall, Ostwall, Siegfried Line, Maginot Line, Mannerheim Line, Stalin Line, Molotov Line, etc.) in connection with the strategic concepts of the respective countries that a fortified line does not necessarily have to be an expression of a defense strategy. Of course, at that time a fortified line had to take over security tasks in the time of mobilization or during the deployment of the mobilized armies. The theory of the "deep apron" Concerning the complex of fortified areas, finally something should be said about the above-mentioned theory of the Soviet military science of the "deep apron". This theory envisaged to establish the conquered border strip from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians and from the Western Bug to the 27th meridian with a depth of up to 300 km as an exclusion zone, thus to create a gigantic apron, to cover it with obstacles and barriers and to occupy it only with the covering troops. This corresponds to the theory of "unfolding back".

Without the support of the main forces of rifle troops, mechanized corps and air forces, these small forces would have been immediately annihilated in unequal combat and the enemy would have reached a depth of about 300 km almost without serious resistance. However, as evidenced by the research presented above, the border strip was immediately pioneered, manned by strong Red Army forces, and thus used not as an exclusion zone but as a strategic deployment area and manned by offensive forces. The Expansion of Rear Security and Other Elements of the War Theater Infrastructure Development A letter from the Military Council of the Western Special Military District (signed by the Commander-in-Chief of the WBMB, Army General Pavlov) to the Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus, P. K. Ponomarenko, and the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, I. S. Bylinski, requesting the implementation of measures to increase the mobilization

readiness of the Byelorussian SSR, dated April 28, 1941, illuminates the enormous scale of the measures to expand the theater of war on the territory of Byelorussia. Although these tasks were politely formulated as requests, there should be no doubt that they had the character of instructions from the supreme political and military leadership in Moscow and, consequently, had to be processed as such. As can be seen from various formulations of the letter, reference is made to tasks that had already been given to the Byelorussian SSR at an earlier point in time, around the end of 1939/beginning of 1940, but which had not been completely fulfilled. In this respect, the above-mentioned letter is probably to be understood as a final reminder from the commander of the Western Special Military District to the civil party and economic organs of the Byelorussian SSR. The author assumes that these tasks for perfecting the infrastructure of the Byelorussian SSR were given in a similar form to all Western Union republics, and to an even greater extent to the Ukrainian SSR as well, and thus takes them as representative of the entire border strip of the Western theater of war. The letter states, "With the aim of increasing the mobilization readiness of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, I ask you to carry out the following measures: I. To secure the air forces" For essential content, see under Airfield Construction. "II. To the repair bases for automobile transport" The task was set:

- To accelerate to the maximum the construction of the Gomel Car Repair Plant, the Minsk Car Repair Station, the Minsk Tire Repair Plant, and the Gomel Tire and Accumulator Plant, and to complete them by 01 August 1941;
 - to increase the capacity of the above repair plants to 1200 general overhauls/year each;
 - m to complete the expansion of stationary area auto repair shops in the cities of Pinsk, Brest, Slonim, Postavy, Mogilev, Xoiniki, and Gomel on an accelerated basis by June 15, 1941, with maximum increase in their capacity. Furthermore, Army General Pavlov demanded:
 - To carry out the necessary major and medium repairs on the 103 movable type A and B auto repair shops of the machine tractor stations existing in the eastern territories of Belarus, to equip them with the full set of tools and equipment and spare parts, and to bring them into full readiness by 01 June 1941;
 - To completely replenish the 18 stationary machine-tractor workshops located in the Byelorussian SSR, to carry out the necessary repairs, and to transfer them to full readiness by June 01; m To complete, fully equip, and prepare for uninterrupted work by June 01, 1941, the machine-tractor workshops in Brest, Belostok, Vilejka, and Baranovich, which have been under construction since 1940; and m To transfer to full readiness by June 01, 1941, all motor vehicles which are in the stock of the national economy.
- "III. On Storage of Mobilization Reserves of Fuel of the People's Commissar for Defense in the Fuel Depots of the Machine-Tractor Stations, Sovkhozes and Establishments With the aim of realizing the free capacities of the fuel depots of the Machine-Tractor Stations, Sovkhozes, Kolkhozes and Establishments available for storage of mobilization reserves of light oil products of the People's Commissar for Defense on the territory of the Byelorussian SSR, I request that all People's Commissars of the Byelorussian SSR be obliged, by 15. May 1941 to ascertain all free barrel capacities which may be suitable for storage for the People's Commissar for Defense by its official bodies with reference to the location and railroad station." ... "IV. On Road Construction" In Item 1, the unsatisfactory condition of the entire road and bridge construction in the Western Special Military District was addressed and, in view of this exceptionally difficult situation for the military district, it was requested that local people also be employed to carry out the road construction work immediately. Item 2 instructs the construction of repair points for motor vehicles with appropriate stocks of repair materials and fuel and lubricants to provide immediate assistance in case of breakdowns along the roads running in the main directions. Specifically, the construction of such repair points was specified in the following directions: "
- a) in the Polozk-Grodno direction - at the points of Molodechno, Grodno, Lida; b) in the Smolensk-

Minsk-Baranovichi-Belostok direction – at the points of Borisov, Minsk, Stolbtsy, Baranovichi, Volkovysk, Belostok; c) in the Roslavl-Bobruisk-Brest direction – at the points of Sluzk, Beresa."

Certainly, the most important thing for our assessment here is the knowledge of the roads established as the main directions. They lead straight into the Belostok frontal salient from the northeast, east and southeast directions.

However, there was no mention of the Rochade roads in this letter. Already in a letter of November 27, 1940 to the Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus, Pavlov pointed out time delays and shortcomings in road and bridge construction in the strip near the border. He was particularly concerned with the restoration of the large number of bridges destroyed by Polish troops, especially in the Brest and Belostok areas, but also with the bridge construction necessitated by the construction of the Dnieper-Bug Canal. For example, of the eight bridges crossing the Narew River that had been destroyed, only two had been rebuilt so far. He spoke of "huge operational-strategic importance" of the aforementioned bridges, saying that delays in their restoration robbed the possibility of using a whole series of the most important strategic roads. He was right, because geographically, the Narew River crosses all deployment roads leading in that direction at a distance of 40 to 60 km from the border. The construction of the destroyed bridges was to be ensured by 01 April 1941. The further specifications also prove that these road and bridge construction projects were primarily for use by the Red Army in the event of war. Thus, it was instructed: o to build special exits along the roads for quick exit from the roads; m to build unpaved roads next to the roads to ensure high marching speeds and to protect them for tractors or horse-drawn vehicles, especially parallel to the Baranovichi-Volkovysk-Belostok road, but also for the case of possibly necessary unloading of vehicles and equipment. m to coordinate the required load-bearing capacity of the bridges to be built with the Military Council of the Western Special Military District; m to have the state authorities install signs at all intersections, junctions and exits; m to prepare reserve sites for the rapid construction of replacement bridges in the event of the destruction of the main bridges; m to provide early opportunities for bypasses and their camouflage at narrow passages; m to establish road repair points every two kilometers on state roads and to stockpile construction materials for repairs of destroyed road sections, logs at bridges for the construction of replacement bridges and billet dams. 61 "VII For chemical protection 1. To complete by 01 June 1941 the construction of all gas shelters mentioned by the plan of defense measures 1941 and also detoxification points. To oblige all People's Commissars to inspect the condition of the gas shelters, bomb shelters, and washing plants located on the territory of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic by 01 June 1941 and to transfer them to full readiness. ..." Army General Pavlov, in his letter, criticizes the fact that the number of mobilization reserves of chlorinated lime created on the territory of the Byelorussian SSR is totally insufficient and the points of their storage too far from the border, and further obliges the People's Commissar for Trade to create maximum reserves of chlorinated lime by 01 June 1941. Detoxification detachments consisting of volunteers from the local population (old men and women) who are not conscripted into the army are to be created at these storage points. "VIII. For medical security 1. establishment of buildings as wartime hospitals a) to complete by May 15, 1941 the work not completed in 1940 on the preparation of the following buildings: in Minsk – typed schools Nos. 12 and 27; in Vitebsk – typed schools Nos. 2, 3 and 7; in Mogilev – typed schools Nos. 1, 11, 24 and the Pedagogical Institute; in Bobruisk – specialized school of forestry; in Gomel – typified schools No. 3 and 16. b) ... complete by July 15, 1941, at the maximum intensified pace, all the works on the military hospitals in the cities of Vitebsk, Polozk, Belostok, Grodno, Baranovichi, Lida, Volkovysk, Belsk, Slonim, Orscha, Sluzk, Pinsk and Gomel provided for in the 1941 plan. c) to commence work on the preparation of the premises in the remaining towns of Kobrin, Voropayevo, Vilejka, Postavy and Glubokoe without delay after receipt of the project documents and cost estimates and to ensure

completion by 01. August 1941. d) to unfold the works for the preparation of barracks buildings as military hospitals in the cities of Polozk, Borisov, Gomel, Pinsk, Krasnoe, Molodechno, and Beresa in the period from May 15 to 25, 1941, and to complete them by August 01, 1941." ... "2. Equipment of sanitary transport ... to finish the preparation of 50 buses and 30 trucks for the transport of the sick and wounded by June 15, 1941." ... "6. To clean and put in full order by 01 June 1941 all wells and other water sources on the entire territory of the Byelorussian SSR." ... "IX. Veterinary security 1. In accordance with the task of the General Staff of the Red Army, veterinary clinics of special purpose have been built on the territory of the Byelorussian SSR since 1940 at the following points: (a) Belostok region - in the cities of Belostok, Lomsha, Grodno, Volkovysk, Belsk and Sokolka (b) Brest region - in the cities of Kobrin and Prushany (c) Baranovich region - in the cities of Baranovichi, Slonim, Lida (d) Vileika region - in the cities of Oshmyany, Postavy, Molodechno and Braslav (e) Pinsk region - in Pinsk. All listed veterinary clinics, even main objects, are not completed. I ask to oblige the People's Commissar for Agriculture of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic ... to finish the construction of veterinary clinics of special purpose by June 01, 1941." It is understood that the task was also set to provide the veterinary clinics with the necessary instruments and equipment by 01 June 1941. At the same time, instructions were given to bring the veterinary clinics of special purpose already in existence in the areas of the Byelorussian SSR farther east into full mobilization readiness by 01 June 1941, to carry out "the most decisive measures" to improve the nutritional condition of the horse population, and to organize the shoeing of horses. X. Provision of Rations The condition of the rations supply is estimated to be completely inadequate. Thus, the mobilization stockpile of canned fish as of 01 March 1941 was only 2.2% and of bread flour 8.4%. Those responsible for the storage of mobilization supplies of rations were required to bring the rations supply into conformity with the mobilization plan by 01 June 1941. Further, the task was set to complete the construction of wholesale bakeries in the cities of Grodno, Belostok, and Baranovichi in "the shortest possible time" and to carry out the work of expanding the capacity of existing wholesale bakeries in another 9 cities at an "accelerated pace" and complete it in full by 01 June 1941. XI. On Clothing and Equipment Supply For the repair of uniforms and boots, instructions were issued to bring all tailor repair shops and workshops for the repair of footwear into full readiness by 01 June 1941 and to ensure that they are equipped with sufficient equipment and reserves of repair materials. Likewise, by 1 June 1941, all workshop construction begun to secure repairs to field kitchens and other equipment of the Trosses (the Rear Services - the author) was to be completed, the workshops already in existence for field kitchens, harness, saddles, and equipment were to be placed in full readiness, and these were to be provided with the necessary equipment and reserves of repair materials. In planning the repair capacity of the workshops, it was assumed that 370,000 uniform coats, 1,414,000 field blouses, the same number of breeches, and 494,000 pairs of boots would be required. XII Securing of Quarters, Construction of Camps and Training Grounds Officially for the quartering of troops of the Western Special Military District, but internally certainly for special uses, a number of buildings were requisitioned, including the municipal prison in Brest, the building of the dismantled tobacco factory in Grodno, various buildings in Baranovichi, including the central synagogue there, and others. Ten sections of land, all located in the border zone of Belarus, were designated as sites for the construction of camps with a capacity of 150 to 300 wagons. In his letter, Pavlov paid special attention to the creation of the necessary training and artillery firing ranges in the zone near the border, for which the first requests for the provision of the necessary terrain sections were already made on July 27, 1940. These were now to be handed over by May 15, 1941.

XIII On the mobilization readiness of railroads Substantive content under railroad construction.

XIV Air defense

With regard to air defense, the state organs of Belarus were ordered to check the condition of air defense in the zone near the border and the major centers without fail and to bring the air defense into permanent combat readiness by June 1, 1941. Likewise, by 01 June 1941, the population was to be systematically trained in the performance of light camouflage (obscuration) and thereby educated in discipline and order. 62 The stipulations for increasing the mobilization readiness of Belarus in the above-mentioned letter of the Military Council of the Western Special Military District of 28 April 1941 were taken very seriously by the Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus and implemented immediately. Thus, among other things, as early as April 29, 1941, a decision of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus was issued on the construction of underground shelters in Minsk for 15,000 people and in Belostok for 5,000 people. 63 The breadth and all-roundness of the preparation of the territories near the border in the interests of the Red Army can only lead to the conclusion: a military confrontation was prepared here with extraordinary intensity and in the shortest possible time. The entire military-historical literature offers countless examples that immediately after the beginning of the German-Soviet war extensive stockpiles of technology and material resources were destroyed or captured by the Wehrmacht. At the beginning of the war, the Red Army maintained a total of 887 supply bases, camps and their detachments, including 146 artillery camps, 229 fuel camps, 133 rations camps and 165 technical camps (for the tank, intelligence, engineer, air forces, etc.) with enormous stocks of ammunition, fuel and other material and technical resources of all kinds. Let us therefore look at the distances of the established front or army supply camps from the state border, as shown in the following Table I.15 using the example of the Western Special Military District:

Since the structure of the army's defense, according to the pre-war views of the Red Army, included an advanced operational exclusion zone of 25–50 km, the tactical defense zone of 20–30 km, and the operational defense zone of likewise 20–30 km, it can be assumed that most of the army camps were established too far forward in the tactical defense zone. As can be seen in Table I.15, even the army supply camps of the 13th Army (of the II Operational Squadron of the Western Special Military District/Western Front) were established at a depth of about 50–70 km from the border and thus, according to the above-mentioned pre-war views, in front of their actual defense zone in the depth of the tactical defense zone. So a rear security from the front? Out of 54 camps of the Western Special Military District, 85% of the camps were already deployed, only 8 camps (15%) still required mobilization to establish readiness. The readiness of these camps should be established $M + 6$ days. Thus, with the exception of these eight camps, the rearward securing of combat operations on the Western Front was essentially assured from the beginning of the war. 65 As of 01 June 1941, the Red Army was assured of 96.8% of its ordered mobilization reserves of fuel. 66 Evaluable and conclusive data on the condition and locations of the corps and division depots, however, are scarce. The main supply unloading points of the armies of the Western Special Military District were organized near the front. According to the written communication of the commander, Army General Pavlov, to Tymoshenko, dated late May/early June 1941, all 14 unloading points for the supply of the 3rd, 4th, 10th, and 13th Armies were located in the frontal balcony of Belostok or in its immediate vicinity at a distance of 18 to a maximum of 87 km from the frontier line. These unloading points were located in the planned main directions of attack of the armies of the Western Special Military District, behind the first line of fortified spaces but, as a rule, still in front of the rear defensive sections to be established if necessary. They had to be lost if the enemy's attack was not very successful. Also, nearly all supply depots and unloading points for securing troop supplies in the Western Special Military District were within the

radius of action of the German air force. 67 At this point, further proof that the entire storage of supplies and reserves for the rearward securing of the Red Army confirmed the planned offensive warfare will be dispensed with, since the former Marshal of the Soviet Union, M.V. Sakharov, (1938–1941 Aide to the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army), already confirmed the above with the following words:

Quote I.16

Schwipper, Bernd. Germany in Stalin's sights: the path of the Red Army into the European War and the deployment of the Wehrmacht in 1941 (German Edition) (p. 64). Kindle Edition.

"The Red Army was ensured with all supplies for 2–3 months of war. However, about half of the supplies of the main material means were located in the western border districts. Their arrangement met the requirements of an attack, but not those of a strategic defense."

The totality of efforts in the expansion of the military infrastructure The totality of efforts is evidenced by the short-term and rigorous use of enormous financial, material and human resources. The use of financial resources The importance assigned to the short-term expansion of the military infrastructure of the conquered deployment area can be seen in the decision of the Defense Committee of 09 March 1940 on the allocation of huge and earmarked financial resources. According to this decision, the new western part of the Belarusian Special Military District alone received 279,880,650 rubles for military construction. These funds were to be used as follows: 103,000,000 rubles for military construction; 126,635,000 rubles for the construction of the so-called Molotov Line; 3,000,000 rubles for the construction of the new military base. Molotov line; 3,225,650 rubles for the construction of the special intelligence network; 20,020,000 rubles for the construction of operational airfields; and 27,000,000 rubles for the creation of storage capacities for gasoline. 69 The Use of Manpower An order of the Bureau of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus, dated October 14, 1940, on the additional release of workers to perform defense tasks, cited as an example, demonstrates the ruthless use of all available human resources for pioneer expansion in the interests of the troops of the Western Special Military District. The forces ordered on October 14, 1940, were to be ready as early as October 15.

Quote I.17

"City of Minsk October 14, 1940 Special Folder Strictly Secret The Belostok and Brest Oblast Committees of the CP(B) of Belarus ... are to be obliged to hand over to the Brest Oblast 5000 workers and 500 carts and to the Belostok Oblast 12,400 workers and 1,300 carts in the period from October 15 to December 01, 1940, in the order of the Western Special Military District for the performance of defense work."

The use of draft animals The totality of the use of all, especially civilian social resources, for the hasty expansion of the military infrastructure in the Belostok beachhead is also evidenced by the following figures, the use of the workhorses available in the respective districts for pioneer construction projects:

Table I.18 (cf. p. 65)

Districts of the Belostok region	Total number of working horses in the district	Of which consulted to pioneering works	Percent
Avgustovsk district	5,889	7,485	5,919
Grodnensk district	6,668	4,195	4,600
Dombrowsk district	6,000	4,720	5,340
Skidelsk district	3,360	78	80
Sapozkinsk district	80	80	80

After all, 80% of all horses in the respective districts were conscripted. The enormous deployment of forces bears the character of a kind of pre-war Bolshevism.

Timing The following Table I.19 summarizes again the dates mentioned in the resolutions, directives, and letters above:

Table I.19

Ordered Actions/Projects	Dates of Actions in 1941	April	May	June	July	August	Completion of
construction of 9 airfields after reminder final by 15 June 1941	15. Completion of construction of auto repair and tire repair plants in Minsk and Gomel by 01 August 1941						
28.	01. Transfer of mobile auto repair shops to full readiness by 01 June 1941	28.					
01. Establishment of full readiness of stationary machine-tractor workshops by 01 June 41	28.						
01. Completion of machine-tractor workshops under construction and their preparation for uninterrupted work by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Establishment of full readiness of vehicles in national economy by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Accelerated expansion of stationary area auto repair shops and their equipment by 15 June 1941	28.						
15. Repair and replenish all movable auto repair shops and bring them to full readiness by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Ensuring trouble-free operation of all machine-tractor workshops after repair and replenishment with necessary spare parts by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Establishing readiness of all motor vehicles of the national economy by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Reconstruction of destroyed bridges over the Narew River and the Dnepr-Bug Canal; Original deadline: 01 April 1941	01. Completion of construction of all gas shelters and decontamination points by 01 June 1941	28.					
01. Creation of maximum reserves of chlorinated lime by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Preparation of specified buildings as military hospitals by 15 May 1941	28.						
15. Ordered actions/projects Dates of actions in 1941	April	May	June	July	August	Completion of ordered military hospitals in specified cities by 15 July 1941	
28.							
15. Recording and reporting all free storage capacity for fuel by 15 May 1941	28.						
15. Reviewing the condition of the air defenses of the zone near the border and of the major centers and placing them on permanent combat readiness by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Systematic training of the population in the performance of light camouflage (obscuration) by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Preparation of premises as military hospitals in additional cities by 01 August 1941	28.						
01. Preparation of 50 motor buses and 30 trucks for transporting wounded by 15 June 1941	28.						
15 Cleaning of all wells and water sources and their transfer to full readiness by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Completion of construction of special purpose veterinary hospitals in designated cities by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Transfer of special-purpose veterinary hospitals in eastern parts of Belarus to full mobilization readiness by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Completion of rations stockpiling in accordance with mobilization plan by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Completion of construction of planned large bakeries at maximum accelerated pace and expansion of capacity of existing bakeries by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Transfer all tailor and shoemaker shops to full readiness by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Complete construction of shop buildings planned for repair of field kitchens and other equipment by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Provision of necessary training and artillery firing ranges by 15 May 1941	28.						
15. Transfer of air defenses in the border zone and major centers by 01 June 1941	28.						
01. Directive of 06 May 1941 on measures to improve air defenses	Completion of construction and equipping of all existing gas protection covers by 15 June						

1941 06.____ 15. Activation of central command of notification and light camouflage in Minsk by 01 June 1941 and in the other cities by 01 July 1941 06.____ 01. Ensuring all fire protection measures in Minsk and Belostok by 01 July 1941 06.____ 01. Completion of the construction of the Fortified Spaces (the Molotov Line) along the new border by 01 July 1941 ____ 01.

It is immediately apparent that all the essential tasks set were to be accomplished by the end of June 1941 at the latest, and a few that could not be accomplished in a short time were to be accomplished as late as July 1941.

Date Activist February 14, 1941 Directive No. 309-146ss "On the Plan of Railway Construction of the Southwest, West, Northwest Lines and Ensuring Its Fulfillment." CC of the CP(B) and Council of People's Commissars of the USSR February 22, 1941 Directive "On Ensuring the Defense Construction of the Western Special Military District." Council of People's Commissars and CC of CP(B) of Belarus 08 March 1941 Directive "On carrying out paid labor and transportation obligations in the Belostok and Brest regions to fulfill defense construction works." Council of People's Commissars and CC of CP(B) of Belarus 08 March 1941 Directive "On Ensuring the Construction of the Belostok, Brest-Litovsk, Western and Belorussian Railway Lines." Council of People's Commissars and CC of CP(B) of Belarus 01 April 1941 Directive "On Measures to Ensure Airfield Construction for the People's Commissariat of Defense in 1941." Council of People's Commissars and CC of KP(B) of Byelorussia April 11, 1941 Written communication to Secretary of CC of KP(B) of Byelorussia, Ponomarenko, on deficiencies in air defense of cities of Byelorussia People's Commissar for Internal Affairs April 11, 1941 Letter to CC of KP(B) and Council of People's Commissars of Byelorussia with requests about allocation of construction materials for the district Military Council of the Western Special MB 16. April 1941 report on the state of airfield construction 3rd Administration of the People's Commissar for Defense USSR April 25, 1941 letter to Stalin and Molotov "On a possibility of rapid and cheaper construction of bomb-proof cover of 1st category quality." 1st Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus April 28, 1941 Letter to the CC of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of Belarus with requests on the implementation of measures to increase the mobilization readiness of the Byelorussian SSR Military Council of the Western Special Military District April 29, 1941 Directive "On the Construction of Underground Covers." CC of the CP(B) of Belarus 06 May 1941 Directive "On Measures to Improve Air Defense in the Byelorussian SSR." CC of the CP(B) of Belarus May 26, 1941 Directive "On the organization of permanent groups and departments on the territory of Belarus for the destruction of diversants." CC of the CP(B) of Belarus May 30, 1941 Message to Stalin "On ensuring the construction of airfields in Belarus." Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus 07 June 1941 Message to the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "On the state of construction of airfields in the Byelorussian SSR." Secretary of the CC of the CP(B) of Belarus.

Activity Record (Using the Example of the Byelorussian SSR) While the basic tasks of expanding the military infrastructure and establishing mobilization readiness in the western border strips had already been set in early 1940 and their fulfillment had begun by spring 1940 at the latest, an extraordinary increase in all activities of the various military command levels as well as party and state organs in the western border military districts can be noted in the months of February to May 1941. Some important directives, instructions, messages, and reminders from the Western Special Military District that bear out this statement are shown in Table I.20 below. Table I.20 A detailed assessment of the form and content of the above documents leads to the following conclusions: - Basic directives on the

development of the military infrastructure were issued by the highest bodies, the Politburo of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, and signed by Stalin and Molotov. Messages and reports were often addressed directly to Stalin and Molotov; - While in the documents of 1940 such a view of the party and state organs of the Union Republic is still discernible that the newly won western border strip had to be prepared primarily for defensive actions, the high level of activity developed from about February/March 1941 onward, at least by the leaders of the party and the Union Republic, show an increasing understanding of the offensively oriented preparations of the Red Army; - Civilian projects are not mentioned; all measures and construction projects are ordered exclusively in the interests of the Red Army and at the expense of the civilian population. Conclusions from Chapter I, Creation and Expansion of the Theater of War 1. The Main Objective of the Local Campaigns - the Creation of the Theater of War The detailed study of the immediate measures initiated primarily in the interests of the Red Army and to the detriment of the civilian population in the conquered areas near the border leads to the conclusion that the political and military leadership, but above all Stalin, in carrying out the campaigns in 1940 was primarily concerned with the creation of a strategically advantageous deployment area in the envisaged western theater of war. The resulting strategic and operational advantages of the newly created configuration of the Western theater of war prove the real reasons for conducting these campaigns to expand Soviet territory. The campaigns were the way, the creation of the theater of war the goal. It is already characteristic that the annexation of these territories did not arise from the aggravation of own internal contradictions, possibly the formation of a revolutionary situation in these countries, but was forced from the outside by Russia using its military power, although Stalin had promised not to touch the internal structure of these countries. The fact that all these campaigns for the creation of the theater of war were already directed against Germany can be seen from the respective justifications given, which seem more than flimsy and rather deliberately created for the execution of these campaigns of the Red Army. With Germany, specified in all operational plans as the main enemy, an immediate line of confrontation had now been established by the elimination of Poland, which made a direct military attack by the Red Army possible. Let us not ignore the fact that the threat to iron ore and nickel supplies from Sweden and Finland, as well as the threat to oil supplies from Romania by the Soviet Union, had assumed a new dangerous dimension. Since rubber supplies from the Far East were also passing through USSR territory because of England's naval blockade, the USSR had gained the ability to cut off Germany's supply of crucial strategic raw materials. 3. the nature of the infrastructural development of the theater of war testifies to the preparation of offensive actions The early and all-round preparation of the theater of war was considered an important part of creating the strategic conditions for war. Immediately after the reconquest of the western territories of Belarus and Ukraine and the annexation of the Baltic States, the preparation of the spaces for military use began. The totality of the huge deployment of forces, centrally directed on behalf of the Red Army, proves the military purpose of the development of the infrastructure. The early militarization of the deployment area with simultaneous postponement of all civilian requirements, combined with a comprehensive militarization of the entire social life as well as the creation of a mobilization-oriented preparation of the population and the territories disprove the thesis of an insidious, unanticipated invasion of the Soviet Union by the Wehrmacht. The way of preparing the theater of war (evidence see above) betrays the offensive intentions of the top political and military leadership of the USSR, especially Stalin, and refutes the account of supposedly planned defensive actions with the beginning of the war. Key indicators are summarized below: m All railroad lines, sections of lines, and partial double-track expansion planned for immediate reconstruction or new construction led directly into the frontal salient of Belostok and Lvov. Reconstruction and new construction of troop unloading points were carried out close to the border and on the westbound railroad lines. m The expansion of the road system and bridges

primarily covered frontline and army main roads leading into the frontline salients. The manner of preparing the main roads, which were called strategic roads (cf. letter of November 27, 1940), attests to their clearly military planned purpose. m None of the documents provided for the development of rocade routes in the north-south direction. Maneuvers with forces and means behind the front, as required in the case of a defensive operation after recognition of the enemy's main direction of attack, were not planned. The rail network was thus earmarked for offensive action.

m The grouping of air force bases, operational airfields and operational airfields close to the front and designed for offensive purposes, especially when they are newly built, precludes planning for a defensive approach. The construction of the airfields in the area close to the border suggests an offensive intention, since it hardly seems possible to quickly withdraw the squadrons from surprise strikes by the Luftwaffe. If the intention had been defensive, the main air forces would not have been located in the space near the border but, in the interest of a reasonable space-time relationship, at a depth of more than 200 to 300 km from the border. It seems clear that the planning of the grouping of air forces was based only on an offensive intention, not on the conduct of a strategic defensive. m The neglect and half-heartedness of the pioneer technical development of the fortified areas, the inadequate state of the weapons equipment of the pioneer installations, and their low level of personnel replenishment (cf. Chapter III, Mobilization) preclude the planning of a defensive operation with the beginning of the war. The very late efforts to further equip the bunkers of the fortified areas and to close gaps at the roots of the front-line balconies (from about mid-May 1941) (cf. VI Chapter, Deployment) suggest a dual strategy of the Red Army in the last weeks due to a feared preemptive strike by the Wehrmacht. m The arrangement of the camps of the fronts and the armies, their staggering with the accumulation of enormous reserves in the strip near the border, which were immediately exposed to the blows of the Luftwaffe, confirms the planning and preparation of offensive actions of the Red Army. This is also the view of the Marshal of the Soviet Union, Sakharov (cf. quote I.16). m The obvious connection of the conducted exercises of offensive elements of the troops, such as the frontal attack operation of the Western Special Military District practiced in October 1940, the inadequacies in the preparation of the infrastructure of the theater of war found in the process, and the measures initiated as early as in the spring of 1940 for the development of transport routes in the direction of the West, up to the serious admonitions of the commander of the Western Special Military District in the spring of 1941, also becomes clear. They show: The extended conclusions concerning the development of infrastructure were drawn while practicing an offensive operation, that is, in the interest of preparing an offensive. 4. timing of military actions Almost all the dates and deadlines for infrastructure development mentioned in the documents, summarized again in Table I.19, are oriented to the month of June 1941. The general timing for completion of new construction or expansion of existing airfields was oriented to the middle of 1941. The timing for increasing the passability of the rail network also refers in general to the year 1941. The regions were to be prepared for war by about the end of June 1941. As evidenced by the above-mentioned letter of the Military Council of the Western Special Military District of April 28, 1941, essential elements of territorial mobilization were already to be realized by June 01, 1941. Although the military exploitation of the annexed territories had already begun in early 1940, the many directives and messages (cf. Table I.20) from February 1941 onward attest to the Soviet Union's entry into the immediate war preparation period, while the criticisms expressed and determinations made in them suggest that in 1940 work on the infrastructural development of the theater of war was not carried out with the necessary single-mindedness. The hectic use of all human and material resources, the short-term nature of the tasks and deadlines, and the uncompromising and total nature of all measures to prepare the theater of war suggest that the offensive may have been planned to begin in the first decade

of July 1941. The detailed consideration of the above-mentioned measures for the development of the infrastructure of the Western theater of war reflects the content of the operational plan of September 18, 1940, but in particular its corrections of October 5, 1940, determined by Stalin. This finds expression in: m the extension of the future theater of war from the coast of the Barents Sea to the shore of the Black Sea; m the extensive allocation of financial resources for the increased pioneer expansion of the Fortified Spaces in the northwestern direction in the area of the Baltic Special Military District to free up forces for the conduct of an offensive in the southwestern direction; m the neglect of the development of the Fortified Spaces and the creation of a replacement too late to close gaps at the roots of the balconies, the insufficient equipment and staffing of the Fortified Spaces in the operational directions west and southwest, where the implementation of offensive actions was planned; m the concentration of the development of the railroad network and the construction of airfields in the southwest direction in the area of the Kiev Special Military District with the aim of a rapid deployment of troops for the offensive planned in this main direction. Thus, the placement of the creation of the theater of war, its pioneering development, the specific offensive-supporting way of organizing the rear security and the mobilization of the territories in the overall plan of the war against Germany is sufficiently proved and confirms the strategic idea of the operational plan of September 18, 1940 with the corrections ordered by Stalin as well as all its clarifications (March 11 and May 15) in 1941.

II. chapter

Setting the course for the preparation of offensive actions of the Red Army

Stalin's speech of 14(17) April 1940¹ to senior commanders of the Red Army.

Stalin's strategy, which formed the decisive basis of the further expansion and development of the Red Army, was by no means an aggressive strategy from the beginning. In the years 1938/1939 to 1941, however, a gradual change occurred in the development of the Red Army from a defensive instrument to an army with an offensive mission. Already the reconquest of Western Belarus and Western Ukraine as well as the Finnish campaign were steps on this path. Let us consider a few excerpts from the military-political situation in April 1940, the time of Stalin's speech: m As a result of the Polish campaigns of Germany and the Soviet Union, a common demarcation line had been created in 1939 and the buffer state of Poland between the USSR and Germany had been eliminated, a buffer which in September 1938 made the intervention of the Red Army in a possibly developing German-Czech military conflict impossible and which, among other things, was also the cause of the talks between the French and the Soviet Union. The Russian-Finnish war had ended with the signing of a peace treaty (March 12, 1940) on March 13, 1940. Although only partial successes were achieved, Stalin nevertheless secured a strategically more favorable starting position for securing the northern flank of the future deployment area, for example in the eastern Baltic Sea. m The German-Polish war, which had begun on September 1, 1939, had developed into a European war since September 3, 1939, due to the declarations of war by England and France against Germany. Initially, the war was fought as a so-called "sit-down war," but in April 1940, it pushed toward a military solution. m On April 9, 1940, the Wehrmacht began its military offensive against Germany. m On April 9, 1940, the Wehrmacht began its offensive against Germany. April 1940, the Wehrmacht launched Operation Weserübung, occupying Denmark and landing in Norway with the aim of pre-empting a British invasion of Norway and securing the continued supply of Swedish iron ore, which was vital to German industry for the war effort. m Thus a number of favorable foreign policy and military strategic conditions for a possible intervention of the USSR in the European military conflict were ripening, for which, however, the Red Army at that time was not sufficiently prepared either structurally or in terms of armaments in the magnitude to be

expected, nor was it prepared in terms of the content of its agitation and propaganda ("MIR" (peace) was shouted from every house wall). The basic military planning of the USSR, still valid in April 1940, confirmed the defensive mission given to the Red Army in November 1937 to be ready to defend the USSR in the West as well as in the East. The key statements of both the "Perspective Plan of the Development and Reorganization of the Red Army in 1938-1942" 2 and the "Mobilization Plan of 1938-1939" 3 (MP 22), both adopted on November 29, 1937, and the Red Army's "Operational Plan 1938" 4 of March 24, 1938, substantiate this statement. (cf. Chapter III, Mobilization) In this military-historical situation, outlined only briefly with a few facts, Stalin spoke to senior commanders of the Red Army on April 14 (17), 1940, at a meeting in evaluation of the Russo-Finnish War. The main points of his speech are excerpted below: 1. First, Stalin referred to the question of whether this war against Finland was necessarily declared. He placed the establishment of Leningrad's security at the center of his justification. Stalin justified the inevitability of this war not only on the basis of the importance of Leningrad's armaments industry (30-35% of the country) or as the second capital of the USSR, but by stating that the conquest of Leningrad could lead to the formation of a "serious base" within the country and from there to the unleashing of a civil war against Soviet power. Peaceful talks with Finland had not produced results, but the security of Leningrad, on which the fate of the country also depended, had to be secured unconditionally. While public propaganda spoke of an allegedly acute threat to Leningrad, Stalin did not mention such a threat from Finland at this internal evaluation with a single word, but spoke only of preventing future possibilities. Obviously, the strategic goal was to create an apron as well as to secure the northern flank of the future western theater of war. Thus the character of the war as a pure war of aggression becomes clear. The reasons for determining the time of the beginning of the war with Finland were explained by Stalin in an extremely revealing way:

Quote II.1

"All this depended not only on us, rather on the international situation. There in the West the three greatest powers are clutching each other's throats, when then should the question about Leningrad be resolved, if not under these conditions, when hands are busy and a favorable situation is presented to us to strike at this moment. It would be a great stupidity, political shortsightedness, to miss this moment and not to try to ask and solve more quickly the question of the security of Leningrad, because the war is still going on in the West. That would be a big mistake."

Stalin thus needed a favorable international situation, which he was willing to exploit rigorously, as the example of the launching of the war against Finland proved. 3 In extensive form, Stalin attempted to justify the expediency of the operational plan, which envisaged a distribution of troops among five attack columns to split the strategic front of the Finnish army. The attached map section (see Chapter I, Theater of War, Map I.4) proves the directions of attack. According to Stalin, the deployment of troops on the Karelian Isthmus, the largest of the attack groupings, had three objectives: "1. to create a serious bulwark against all possibilities and contingencies against Leningrad; 2. to organize reconnaissance of the territory and rear area of Finland; and 3. to create a deployment area (bridgehead – the author) where troops could be brought for a jump." The layout of the attack concept, which Stalin assessed in detail, suggests that it was not just a matter of creating a zone to ensure the security of Leningrad. The attack columns in the north, e.g., in the direction of Petsamo and in the center of Finland in the direction of Kemi, Gulf of Bothnia, can hardly be justified by the creation of a security zone for Leningrad. Also the question remains to be clarified, with which right the reconnaissance of the territory of Finland and the rear area was to be organized and for what purpose a bridgehead "for a jump" was needed further on.

Obviously, these measures already served the preparation of another planned war, the so-called "continuation war", against Finland. 4 In an indelicate manner, Stalin presented the Finns with a choice between two alternatives – partial or complete Sovietization.

Quote II.2

"With the beginning of the war we asked the Finns two questions – choose one out of two – either you go for big concessions or we "pulverize" you and you get the Kuusinen government which will "gut" your government. This is what we told the Finnish bourgeoisie. The latter thought it better to go for concessions so that there would be no people's government. Please. In order to settle the matter amicably, we agreed to these conditions, thus obtaining satisfactory serious concessions, which completely secured Leningrad from the north, from the south and from the west, and which also put all vital centers of Finland under a threat. Now Helsinki is threatened from two sides – from Vyborg and from Hanko."

Doesn't that sound like political blackmail? 5 Stalin radically reckoned with the causes of the deficiencies revealed in the Russo-Finnish War, which prevented the Red Army from being a "modern army. As Stalin outlined, there was a "lack of coordination" at all sections at the beginning of the Russo-Finnish War, and he posed the question, "What did our troops mistake in adapting to the conditions of the war in Finland?" Stalin believed it was the psychology developed as a result of the preceding Polish campaign among troops and commanding officers to "throw caps." And he continued:

Quote II.3

Schwipper, Bernd. Germany in Stalin's sights: the path of the Red Army into the European War and the deployment of the Wehrmacht in 1941 (German Edition) (p. 76). Kindle Edition.

"We were terribly damaged by the Polish campaign, it spoiled us. People wrote whole articles and made speeches that our Red Army is invincible, that nothing resembles it, that it has everything, there are no shortcomings at all, but that was not so and is not so, that our army is invincible. (...) In general, there was no invincible army in history. (...) This psychology, terribly developed in our country, that our army is invincible, is boasting. It must be stopped. These are ignorant people, i.e., great boasters."

The Red Army had never fought a modern war. Stalin called the localized battles in Manchuria, on Lake Khasan, or in Mongolia "small episodes," "stupid stuff," the campaign against Poland a "walk in the park," and the Civil War "was not a real war" because it was fought without artillery, without air forces, without tanks, without mine launchers. The Civil War "was a special war, not a modern one. We were poorly armed, poorly clothed, poorly fed, yet we defeated the enemy, who had many times more armament, was many times better armed, here the spirit (of the troops – the author) played a major role." But this, he said, led to commanders leading their regiments in "hurrah" or quickly making an attack without artillery preparation. "This does not involve anything modern." Stalin derived the conclusion that it was mainly the "cult of traditions and the experience of the Civil War" that prevented the commanding officers from conducting the war in Finland in a new way, from changing "to the track of modern war," to "new methods of modern war," such as the production of new weapons. 6 Stalin then asked the question, "But what is modern war, (...) what does it require?" Regarding armament and combat technology, he answered it as follows: 1. A modern war requires "masses of artillery". "Whoever wants to rebuild in a modern way must understand, artillery decides the fate of war." Nor, he said, should shells and cartridges be spared if one wants to shatter the forward edge of the

defenses or the enemy's rearward space. 2. "Air forces, massed air forces, not hundreds, but thousands (...)" "(...) who wants to wage war in the modern way and win in the modern war, can not say that it is necessary to save (...)" 3. "Next – tanks, also the decisive thing, necessary are massed tanks, not hundreds, but thousands. Tanks protected by armor, – that's all. It is necessary to give (to crush – the author) the enemy more shells and cartridges, this will spare their own people and preserve the forces of the army." 4. "Mine launchers, there is no modern war without mine launchers, massed mine launchers. All corps, all companies, battalions, regiments must have mine throwers, 6-barreled absolutely, 8-barreled (...) This is terribly necessary for modern war (...) If you want a war to cost us little blood, do not spare on mines." and 5. The automation of small arms. 7. Stalin also paid great attention to the attitude of the subjective factor of the Red Army to a modern war with the following demands:

The Red Army had never fought a modern war. Stalin called the localized battles in Manchuria, on Lake Khasan, or in Mongolia "small episodes," "stupid stuff," the campaign against Poland a "walk in the park," and the Civil War "was not a real war" because it was fought without artillery, without air forces, without tanks, without mine launchers. The Civil War "was a special war, not a modern one. We were poorly armed, poorly clothed, poorly fed, yet we defeated the enemy, who had many times more armament, was many times better armed, here the spirit (of the troops – the author) played a major role." But this, he said, led to commanders leading their regiments in "hurrah" or quickly making an attack without artillery preparation. "This does not involve anything modern." Stalin derived the conclusion that it was mainly the "cult of traditions and the experience of the Civil War" that prevented the commanding officers from conducting the war in Finland in a new way, from changing "to the track of modern war," to "new methods of modern war," such as the production of new weapons. 6 Stalin then asked the question, "But what is modern war, (...) what does it require?" Regarding armament and combat technology, he answered it as follows: 1. A modern war requires "masses of artillery". "Whoever wants to rebuild in a modern way must understand, artillery decides the fate of war." Nor, he said, should shells and cartridges be spared if one wants to shatter the forward edge of the defenses or the enemy's rearward space. 2. "Air forces, massed air forces, not hundreds, but thousands (...)" "(...) who wants to wage war in the modern way and win in the modern war, can not say that it is necessary to save (...)" 3. "Next – tanks, also the decisive thing, necessary are massed tanks, not hundreds, but thousands. Tanks protected by armor, – that's all. It is necessary to give (to crush – the author) the enemy more shells and cartridges, this will spare their own people and preserve the forces of the army." 4. "Mine launchers, there is no modern war without mine launchers, massed mine launchers. All corps, all companies, battalions, regiments must have mine throwers, 6-barreled absolutely, 8-barreled (...) This is terribly necessary for modern war (...) If you want a war to cost us little blood, do not spare on mines." and 5. The automation of small arms. 7. Stalin also paid great attention to the attitude of the subjective factor of the Red Army to a modern war with the following demands:

"Next, create a culturally rich, qualified, and educated commander workforce. We do not have such a commander stock, or they are individuals." He would also have to be able to command the aviation forces, the artillery, the tanks, the armored brigades, the mine launchers, but if he had no general ideas about these types of weapons, what instruction could he give? But that was not the general commander of troops of the old era of civil war. Only then, he said, did he possess authority. "Further. Well-organizing and artfully working staffs are required. The staff, the body that elaborates and fulfills orders. This is what modern war requires." "Therefore, for a modern war, well-trained disciplined fighters are required, initiative-rich. In our fighter the initiative is not enough. He is little developed individually. He is poorly trained (...) We need a new fighter. To create him is necessary and possible: initiative-rich,

individually developed, disciplined." "For modern war we need political workers who are politically steadfast and who master the military cause. It is not enough for political workers to say the words – the party of Lenin – Stalin – as well as – hallelujah, hallelujah – repeatedly." Stalin meant that these were those conditions required to fight a modern war and to be victorious in that war. These literal translations, despite some omissions in the text of the shorthand, show the clarity and decisiveness of Stalin's demands for a modernly equipped formidable army capable of attack, with an all-round educated staff of commanders, competent staffs, well-trained, disciplined fighters rich in initiative, and political workers of high steadfastness. 8 Stalin further asked the question whether the Red Army had been such a modern army when it entered the war with Finland? And he answered it, "No, it was not." But in any case, he said, the Red Army was shelled and received its baptism of fire in Finland. Despite all its shortcomings, however, the Red Army grew stronger in the course of the war and emerged from it as an almost modern army. A plus, he said, were those experiences gained on the fields of Finland. However, he also stated: "It is a good thing that our army had the opportunity to gain this experience not from the German air forces, but with God's help in Finland." 9 Further, Stalin dealt with the question "Is the Finnish Army a modern army?" and answered it as follows: "From the point of view of defense of the fortified lines, it, the Finnish Army, is more or less satisfactory, but as such it is not modern, because it is very passive in defense and looks to the defense line of the fortified space as the Mohammedan looks to Allah." In the course of the three months of fighting, he said, there had not been a single instance of a serious mass attack by the Finnish army, nor had it turned out for counterattacks very sparingly and then retreated with heavy losses. "This is the main shortcoming of the Finnish Army. It is not created and educated for attack, but for defense, where defense is not active, but passive. Defense with deep fetishistic belief, with belief in invulnerable line. I cannot call such an army modern." And he continued, "An army which is not educated for attack, but for passive defense; an army which has no serious artillery; an army which has no serious air force, although it would have all possibilities for it; an army which conducts good partisan attacks – goes into the rear space, erects barricades and other things – such an army I cannot call an army." At the end of his remarks, Stalin drew a thoroughly interesting conclusion:

Quote II.4

"Do you ask, whom did we defeat? Well, of course, we defeated the Finns. But that is not the most important thing in this war." And he further explained, "We not only defeated the Finns, we also defeated their teachers, we defeated the German defense technology, we defeated the English defense technology, we defeated the French defense technology. Not only did we defeat the Finns, but we also defeated the technology of the most advanced countries in Europe. Not only the technology of the most advanced states of Europe, we defeated their tactics, their strategy. (...) This is the most important thing of our victory."

(tumultuous applause, all the generals and officers rose and shouted "Hurrah") Let us consider in just a brief outline the foreign policy, strategic-conceptual, and armament steps of the top political and military leadership of the USSR that followed Stalin's speech:

– The resumption of talks with England, such as the holding of talks on an economic agreement as early as April 1940, attests to Stalin's interest in turning toward England and improving relations, which were at a "freezing point." For example, when the newly appointed English Ambassador Stafford Cripps delivered a letter from Churchill to Molotov at 5:00 p.m. on July 01, 1940, with the aim of using the "obvious Soviet concern about the consequences of complete German victory" in France to achieve a

turnaround in Soviet policy as the "only chance" for England, he was already received by Stalin for talks at 6:30 p.m. the same day. Only two days later, on July 3 and 4, 1940, Churchill invited the USSR ambassador to Great Britain, I. M. Maiski, for a talk. 5

- Continuing the policy of localized expansive actions to secure the flanks of the planned theater of war through the military occupation of the Baltic States on June 15-17, 1940 (referred to in documents of the Russian State Military Archives as the "Baltic Campaign"), Stalin secured access to the central Baltic Sea, and by annexing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina on June 28, 1940, the strategic deployment area was expanded in the south/southwest directions to secure the southern flank. A campaign in East Prussia was also prepared.

- In accordance with his speech, Stalin immediately stepped up efforts to expand the Red Army's offensive capability (examples) (see also the other chapters):

- Late May 1940, Stalin's directive to reform the armored forces in the form of the formation of 8 Mechanized Corps (2 armored divisions each and 1 mechanized rifle division), which were fully replenished, at least in terms of personnel, as early as 01 October 1940; the replenishment with tanks approached the wartime strength of 888 tanks per Mechanized Corps.

- From June to fall 1940, perfecting command structures by forming 7 more army staffs (the 7th, 8th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 17th, and 26th Armies); 6

- Mid-1940, renewed partial mobilization with conscription of 766,000 reservists in preparation for an East Prussia campaign, disguised as "large-scale training exercises."

- 04 July 1940, increase by an additional 30 divisions the number of units to be raised after the proclamation of mobilization in the first year of the war;

- 06 July 1940, beginning of Red Army deployment to western border military districts; securing structural changes and creating conditions for mass deployment of rifle divisions to the Baltic States, Bessarabia, and northern Bukovina by increasing the peacetime strength of the Red Army to 3,461,200 army personnel;

- 25 July 1940, Introduction of new organizational structures of the aviation forces, consisting of 38 aviation divisions with a total of 163 aviation squadrons and a large number of new formations; The commands of the new aviation divisions had already been formed by 30 September 1940.

- In June-July 1940, the de facto mobilization of the USSR's heavy and armament industries was initiated. On June 27, 1940, the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR came into force, establishing the transition to the 8-hour workday, the 7-day workweek, and the ban on the unauthorized departure of workers and employees from enterprises and institutions. 7 By the decision "On the Elaboration of Mobilization Plans for 1940 and 1941" for industry of July 5, 1940, the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR virtually suspended the plan of current military supplies of armaments for 1940 and instructed the Defense Committee to hand over further additional orders on the main types of armaments for the rest of 1940 within a month. 8 As evidenced by the orders placed

with industry in June/July 1940, the armaments industry of the USSR literally exploded. In June 1940, for example, an order was issued for the production of 600 T-34 tanks in the second half of 1940. 9

- Expansion of the military infrastructure of the planned western theater of war

On July 12, 1940, the People's Commissar for Defense reported to Stalin, Molotov, and Voroshilov the most important immediate measures for improving the infrastructure of the planned western theater of war, especially for increasing the passing capacity of the railroads located in the west and southwest directions in the western areas of Belarus and Ukraine. Measures to improve the railroads of Bessarabia and Bukovina, which had only been occupied on June 28, 1940, were also already included in the presentation. The report focused on the construction of new lines and secondary tracks, unloading ramps, communications links, and rail supply points. 10 m The operational planning of the Red Army General Staff was transformed from the planning of strategic defensive actions to the conduct of a possible strategic offensive. Already the draft operational plan, not later than August 19, 1940 11, clearly set offensive tasks for the actions of the fronts in the main directions of the Western theater of war.

While in this draft the Red Army troops were still given the main task of capturing East Prussia and destroying the concentrations of German troops, the strategic offensive intent became even more evident with the operational plan of September 18, 1940, reported to Stalin and Molotov, the conduct of the main battle of the southwestern front to the upper reaches of the Oder River was substantially deepened and combined with the geostrategic objective of separating Germany from the Balkan states. 12 The message from the People's Commissar for Defense and the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army to Stalin and Molotov, not earlier than 05 October 1940, after receiving criticism of the operational plan submitted in September, concretized with a high degree of clarity the planning and execution of an offensive in the main direction southwest. 13 m With the aim of completely securing the northern flank of the planned theater of war, the operational plan of 18 September 1940 for the continuation of the war against Finland was drawn up under the pretext that Finland had stopped the demobilization of its army, which had begun at the end of the Winter War, and had called up additional cohorts of reservists for training exercises. 14 In the talks of 12-13 November 1940 in Berlin, however, Stalin's plan for waging another war by the USSR against Finland was strictly rejected by Hitler. Unimpressed by this, the People's Commissar for Defense issued a directive to the Leningrad Military District on November 25, 1940, in preparation for this second war to create two fronts directed against Finland.

Conclusions from Chapter II, Setting the Course for Preparing Offensive Actions.

1. the change of Stalin's strategic conception

With this speech, Stalin initiated a new phase of his long-term strategy, a geostrategic concept consisting of continuity and change. While, on the one hand, Stalin continued the military policy course of small steps and expansion-oriented local campaigns to expand the strategic deployment area and to secure the flanks of the future theater of war, all foreign policy, armament, military conceptual and infrastructural measures introduced after his speech of April 14 (17), 1940, reveal the intention of a vigorous change in the direction of planned offensive actions on a large scale in the Western theater of war. Only a few examples (see above) could be selected here from the abundance of measures evidencing this reorientation of strategic conception, the turn toward preparation for offensive action on a large scale. (In the further chapters, these statements will be dealt with in detail).

2. the contradiction between willingness and ability

With all clarity, Stalin made visible the still existing contradiction between, on the one hand, his plan to wage a major offensive war, taking advantage of the favorable foreign policy and military conditions developing as a result of the expansion of the European war, and, on the other hand, the possibilities of being able to wage it in view of the Red Army, which had not yet been structured and equipped for this purpose. After all, at the time of his speech Stalin seemed to have already clearly recognized that, since the hot phase of the war between Germany and France was still to come, Germany's air and naval war with Great Britain was expanding, the hour of his military intervention in this war would come. Stalin's view of this problem - "We shall be the last to appear, but when we appear we shall throw the decisive weight into the balance" - is well known.

3. Stalin's demands for the establishment of offensive capability

With the basic content of his speech - Only an attacking army is a modern army - Stalin made those demands on the Red Army that were to enable it only as an offensive instrument, and thus initiated a new phase of the long-term preparation of the Red Army, without, however, already being able to enter the immediate war preparation stage for the extreme enlargement of the army (only from about January/February 1941). This stage thus represents a crucial foundation in considering the historical events leading up to the German-Russian war of 1941. As evidenced by the subsequent decisions, directives and orders of the highest political and military leadership, as well as all the initiated activities of the General Staff of the Red Army, this phase was to require at least one year. The specific timing of the offensive had to be favorable, as Stalin himself had pointed out, and had to result from the development of the military-political situation, the further course of the war. The measures subsequently initiated to equip and re-equip the Red Army and develop it into an offensive instrument were the precise implementation of the demands outlined here by Stalin.

4. directed against Germany

This was a programmatic speech, which was directed with great unambiguity exclusively against Germany. This obvious thought is by no means speculative. Against whom else might the thousands of modern tanks and aircraft he called for become offensive, or as Stalin termed it, attack? Against France or even England? Although a certain respect for the German air forces was expressed, however, probably with the aim of spreading optimism, talk of victory over German defense technology, tactics and strategy. According to the content of the lecture, Stalin fixed here the planned entry into the war against Germany. And Stalin also gave hints about the time period, as long as "there in the West the three greatest powers are clutching each other's throats." The naming of Germany as the main enemy in all Red Army operational plans proves this statement. Also, the manner of opening war against Finland, which Stalin himself set forth and which was connected with blackmail, found fatal parallels in the appearance of Molotov during the talks in Berlin on November 12-13, 1940, and his presumptuous demands that Finland, the Balkan states of Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Greece, but also Turkey and Iran, the Danube, and even the Great and Little Belts, the Øresund, Kattegat, and Skagerrak, as well as Spitzbergen, be added to the sphere of interest of the USSR.

16 Concluding remark

In Stalin's well-known and regularly used argumentative speech to graduates of military academies on 05 May 1941, he stated: "But now that we have reconstructed our army, provided it sufficiently with technology for modern combat, now that we have become stronger, now it is necessary

to pass from defense to attack (...) To pass from defense to the military policy of offensive actions (...) The Red Army is a modern army, but a modern army is an attacking army." 17 While these statements of 05 May 1941 must be considered as a certain end point of the development of the Red Army into an offensive instrument, Stalin's programmatic speech of 14 (17) April 1940 represents the starting point of this development made public at least for the closest circle of senior commanders of the Red Army. The defensive mission of the Red Army before his speech (apart from the "small episodes" and the "walk" mentioned by Stalin (see above)) and the development of the Armed Forces as well as all social sectors of the USSR after this speech prove this statement. That the turn towards the concrete aggression preparation of the Red Army began with Stalin's speech in evaluation of the Russo-Finnish war of April 14 (17), 1940, is also confirmed by statements of responsible contemporary military officers. Thus, on December 31, 1940, the People's Commissar for Defense, Tymoshenko, in his final speech at the advanced training course of leading cadres of the Red Army, confirmed the timing of the massive start of the Red Army's transformation in the spring/early summer of 1940.

Quote II.5

"We are beginning to lay new foundations, new conditions for the further growth of our Red Army, we are deepening and broadening that transformation in the Red Army which was realized half a year ago on Comrade Stalin's directive."

Even as late as 1969, Colonel General Sakharov confirmed this date.

Quote II.6

"In the spring of 1940 on all these lines (Colonel General Zakharov mentioned the areas of training of troops, the quality of combat technology and armament, the structure of the various branches of the armed forces – the author) with a broad front the planned work reaching a convincing pace was started."

III. chapter

The mobilization of the Red Army

The "Great Doctrinal Exercises" – Prerequisite for the Conduct of an Offensive in the Initial Period of the Planned War

1. the theoretical bases of the mobilization of the red army

Determination of the character of a future war and its initial period was considered to be the decisive basis for determining the way of organizing the mobilization of the Red Army. In contrast to the German conceptions of "blitzkrieg," Soviet military science elaborated the theory of the long-lasting and tense character of a future war started by surprise as a war of exhaustion. According to this, mobilization was to be organized. In order to successfully seize the strategic initiative in the initial period of a war of that time, four complexes, among others, were of fundamental importance: 1. The buildup of powerful and offensive-capable force structures already in peacetime, primarily replenished mechanized troops (armored troops, artillery, airborne forces, air defense) as well as the creation of easily replenishable units (rifle squads, rear services) with a minimum mobilization/partial mobilization effort and a corresponding ironclad stock of material resources; 2. The creation of all preconditions for the covered replenishment of the armed forces to near wartime strength, i.e., for covered partial

mobilization still in peacetime; 3. The development of such an infrastructure on the planned theater of war that ensured the possibilities both of a scheduled execution of all mobilization/telemobilization transports and of an early and rapid concentration and deployment of the attack groupings; and, of course, 4. Such an extent of mobilization, strategic and state reserves that not only secured the initial period of the war, but also ensured its continuation in accordance with the predicted long-lasting character of the war. Since the subject of this chapter is the close connection of the development of the peacetime strength of the Red Army, its replenishments and structures, especially those of the rifle troops, with the mobilization organization, with special attention to the partial mobilizations, only a few key points will be presented on the state of development of the infrastructure of the western theater of war of the USSR (cf. Chapter I, Theater of War), which is essentially connected with mobilization: m The enormous distances of the Soviet Union seriously delayed the implementation of mobilization measures. Whereas before the beginning of World War I conscripts in France, Austria-Hungary or Germany had to travel an average of 210 to 320 km to the place of enlistment, in Russia conscripts from the depths of the country had to travel about 960 to 1060 km.

m The low density of the railroad network in the European part of the USSR lowered the passability of the rail network to about one third of the Central European countries. As evidenced in Chapter I, Theater of War, the condition of the railroad network in the conquered territories of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia did not change significantly by 1940 and could not be fully made up by 1941 despite tremendous efforts to develop the railroad lines, partly due to the re-nailing of the railroads from the European measure to the wider Russian rail measure. In addition, there was an insufficiently developed road system, including river crossings and bridges whose load-bearing capacity often did not allow heavy vehicles, e.g. medium and heavy tanks, to pass. In view of these infrastructural conditions on the western theater of war, which are only briefly outlined here, and a conventional mobilization period of the USSR of 30 to 42 days, even if the Red Army exercised the strategic initiative, the deployment would be too late for an offensive, especially since, as the General Staff of the Red Army put it in its operational plan of May 15, 1941, Germany already held its army in a mobilized state. First, a brief definition of mobilization: Mobilization is the conversion of a country and its armed forces to the requirements of war. The core of mobilization is the transfer of the armed forces from peacetime to wartime strength. This includes the replenishment of personnel and materiel of all existing units and formations to the wartime structure, the establishment of new units, formations and formations not existing in peacetime, including replacements, and the formation of operational command authorities in accordance with the planned wartime structure of the armed forces. 1 And this process requires time, a lot of time. A general and open mobilization of the armed forces cannot remain hidden from the potential adversary and the entire world public. However, the organization and speed of implementation of mobilization measures and concentration of troops has a decisive influence at least on the course of hostilities in the initial period of a war and is of paramount importance if one wants to launch a surprise offensive. So let's look at what insights Soviet military science gained regarding the mobilization of the Red Army in the period between the world wars. The General Staff of the Red Army had already gained important insights by evaluating the results of the mobilization of the tsarist army in the run-up to World War I at the end of July 1914. At that time, "there were two types of mobilization in Russia: a "clandestine" one and an orderly, "official" one, the former to all appearances in two subtypes, with or without conscription of reservists. The "secret" one preceded the "official" one in time. Thus, in order to accelerate the mobilization of the Russian army, on March 2, 1913, the tsar confirmed the regulation on a "war preparation period" to be carried out secretly, which served the purpose of anticipating the enemy in the opening of war operations. The "war preparation period" was divided into two successive

sections, the main content of which was specified as: m the summoning of reserve teams to exercises and maneuvers to the frontier corps in compliance with the "mobilization plan"; m the completion of the establishment of war readiness of the frontier troops and the full war strength of the "forward troops" without ordering general mobilization; m the securing of the frontiers, the traffic routes, the telegraph lines and all installations of military importance; m the relocation of the military hospitals, the "deportation of the families of military personnel", the "issuing of war cards to the troops"; m the "high-pressure increase of the officer corps" by "early appointment of Junkers as officers", etc.a.m. "The "Great Maneuvers" were part of the concealment of the "pre-mobilization" that had been eagerly pursued in the preceding months. 2 The tsar's enactment of the "war preparation period" in the run-up to the outbreak of World War I as early as July 26, 1914, is documented. Its content was triggered by a series of individual orders and served directly to prepare for general mobilization. Partial mobilization as one of the types of mobilization was also already in use. The officially admitted Russian partial mobilization of the four southwestern military districts of Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Kazan, after all a very extensive area with 86 million inhabitants, with 55 infantry divisions and 8 1/2 cavalry divisions, directed against Austria, was allegedly not initiated until July 29, 1914. Of course, the strictest secrecy applied at that time as well. "Russia's military measures would have to be concealed in the process by skilful diplomatic negotiations in order to lull the enemy's fears as far as possible." 2 The above-mentioned measures gave Russia a time advantage of about a week with regard to the mobilization of troops. This gain in time, achieved by the "war preparation period", ensured that the Russians were ready to operate almost simultaneously with the French, despite the most difficult transport conditions. ("The French began the offensive with the 1st and 2nd Armies on August 14, and with the 3rd, 4th and 5th Armies on August 21. The Russians crossed the East Prussian border with the Nyemen Army on the 17th, with the Narew Army on the 21st, and on the southern front the East Galician border on August 20.") 2 Then, on July 31, 1914, only the secret partial mobilization was converted into general mobilization by a supplementary mobilization. With the aim of creating an organization of mobilization corresponding to the character of the future war and gaining time with the opening of the war, the planning of mobilization and its effect on the course of the first operations was an important part of the studies of the General Staff of the Red Army and the military-historical works of Soviet military science in the thirties and forties of the last century. The following examples may prove this statement: Svechin, Isserson, and Shaposhnikov already dealt with the fundamentals of the mobilization of the Red Army. Starting from the character of a future war as a long-lasting battle of exhaustion waged with all possible tension, they came to the conclusion that this would also determine the character of mobilization to a decisive degree and would not be possible without sufficient strategic mobilization reserves. Thus, Shaposhnikov came to the conclusion that a protracted war required a phased character of mobilization. The idea of staggered and uninterrupted (permanent) mobilization, the gradual layering of effort in combat, was also agreed upon by Isserson. He emphasized that no country entering a long struggle could reduce its efforts only to the first echelon of its mobilized cadre army. Nor, he said, could any country simultaneously concentrate in open combat operations all the forces it was capable of mobilizing. He wrote "Behind the first line of the army follow the forces of the second and third lines, conditioning the army's entry into war with deep strategic echelons." 3 M. N. Tuchachevsky, probably one of the most authoritative masterminds for the development of the military theory and practice of the Red Army until his execution, evaluated the experience published by Ludendorff and von Seeckt in evaluating World War I in the mobilization and concentration of the Army, as well as the first steps toward the formation of the Wehrmacht after 1933, and prepared a manuscript which he submitted to Stalin on March 25, 1935. Ludendorff, as Tuchachevsky pointed out, had been very dissatisfied with the pace of the first period of the war in 1914, since mobilization and concentration of troops were delayed until the

16th day of mobilization. According to Tuchachevsky, von Seeckt called it the goal of the strategy to create early on mobile forces highly qualified and capable of carrying out operations. For this reason, von Seeckt demanded to have maximally replenished and combat-ready divisions already in peacetime, in order to be able to achieve a rapid concentration of troops ahead of the enemy, which would not be delayed by any substantial replenishment/addition of formations and units. Thus, according to von Seeckt, in order to develop a powerful defense capability of the country, it was also inevitable to introduce general conscription. 4 This manuscript of Tukhachevsky was corrected and supplemented by Stalin personally and, as further developments prove, formed one of the bases of the planned expansion of the Red Army in the field of mobilization. In the fall of 1939, the Military History Department of the General Staff of the Red Army also began its military historical studies to analyze the wars of the last period as well as the beginning of World War II. World War II. In the three-volume edition "The History of Wars and the Art of War" (Russian) presented by this department, great attention was paid to the elaboration of views and forecasts on the character of future military conflicts. Thus, the authors noted that, in contrast to World War I, which was analyzed in detail, in order to ensure the strategic surprise of an attack, the capitalist states proceeded to establish the war readiness of the armed forces gradually, without declaring general mobilization, under the aspect of various reserve exercises, alert training and exercise mobilizations or of covered partial mobilizations. The lessons of the events of 1938 would have shown that the mobilization of modern capitalist armies would be covered and carried out very quickly. In the period of the partition of Czechoslovakia, a large number of units had been mobilized by the German and Polish armies under the pretext of reserve training, and in Germany, moreover, under the pretext of training camps of fascist organizations. The suddenness of the attack, the authors further noted, was one of the characteristic and striking features of Germany's doctrine of attacking the enemy with unexpected blows from formidable motorized shock armies and the air forces, thwarting his mobilization and thus ensuring the deployment of its own mobilized armies. 5 On the basis of these and other findings and experiences, including those from local campaigns, the following essential military-scientific views were formed to perfect the theory and practice of the Red Army's mobilization readiness in the 1940s: 1. The characteristic feature of modern war is the sudden surprise attack without any declaration of war. The exchange of diplomatic notes and talks of the past is replaced by sudden strikes of the air forces and mechanized troops (the shock armies) with the aim of destroying the first echelon of the enemy's troops, disorganizing the mobilization of his forces and destroying vital centers of his power at an early stage. This requires the existence of the forces necessary for the first surprise operations on the scale of the troops of the I. and possibly the II. strategic squadrons with high combat readiness, wartime organization, near-war replenishment and equipment status and minimal mobilization effort already in peacetime, thus initially without the necessity of the time-consuming reorganization of formations and units for the first surprise blow of the war. 3. the residual replenishment of the armed forces to a personnel level close to wartime strength is carried out in disguise and very quickly without proclamation of general mobilization under the pretext of exercises, maneuvers, reservist training and courses as a covered partial mobilization in a secret "war preparation period", possibly initially limited to the military districts of the respective planned theater of war, with simultaneous preparation for the triggering of general mobilization, which, however, is not proclaimed until the beginning of hostilities. (4) In view of the prolonged intensive character of the war and the necessity of introducing additional strategic squadrons into combat, a deep staggering of all mobilization measures is required, which is achieved by the subsequent transfer to permanent mobilization with the aim of redeploying formations and units and providing the necessary personnel and material replacements on the basis of strategic mobilization and the state reserves. As evidenced by the decisions, directives, and instructions of the highest political leadership of the USSR and the People's Commissar

for Defense on perfecting the mobilization readiness of the Red Army, these views found their way into political and military practice. And they were confirmed by Stalin personally (see Tukhachevsky's manuscript) or ordered, confirmed, or significantly influenced by him and his political leadership bodies in the form of all mobilization plans, decisions, and directives, which usually bear his signature. Mobilizations have a long tradition in the Red Army. Already two years after the end of the USSR's civil war, the Red Army was mobilized for military support of the revolution in Germany. At that time, there was no mobilization plan at all, as the Chief of Staff of the Red Army reported to the Revolutionary Military Council in April 1923. 6 So let us take a closer look at the development of the Red Army and the forms and methods of its mobilization. After a detailed analysis of the known decisions and directives of the supreme political and military leadership of the USSR, as well as the above-mentioned military scientific bases, the staggered development of the organization of the mobilization of the Red Army can be divided into three stages: 1. Stage - The stage of continuous growth and perfection of all bases (until January/February 1941) - a long-term strategy 7 2nd Stage - The stage of extreme growth and partial mobilization directed against Germany; The war preparation period; (January/February 1941 to June 1941) 3. Stage - The stage of declaration of general and open mobilization with opening of the offensive (supplementary mobilization) and its subsequent transfer to permanent mobilization (planned about 1 decade July 1941) Although the general and open mobilization of the USSR was not triggered in the run-up to the German-Soviet war, the development of the Red Army in the last pre-war years certainly corresponded to mobilization staggered in small steps. A number of features, usually assigned to only one mobilization, which were already realized in peacetime, especially with the decision on Mobilization Plan 41, substantiate this statement. Such features included: m the production of the Red Army's wartime divisions, which precluded the necessity of redeploying units before the start of an offensive as part of a general mobilization; m the systematic reduction of the volume of personnel call-ups in the event of mobilization by steadily increasing personnel strength and bringing it closer to the Red Army's wartime strength even in peacetime; - the formation of field command bodies corresponding to the war structures; - the replenishments of the Mechanized Corps, despite a number of missing tanks and the artillery, to nearly 100% in terms of personnel, and of the rifle divisions close to wartime replenishments within the framework of a partial mobilization (the so-called "Great Training Exercises"); - the concentration of replenishments within the framework of partial mobilization, as well as in the deployment of new structural elements, on the frontier military districts, especially on the troops planned for action in the main directions southwest and west. Table III.1 below shows the number of divisions planned in the event of Red Army deployment, the total number of which reached 303 divisions before the start of the war in June 1941, despite a number of replenishment and equipment deficiencies, without having triggered mobilization.

Table III.1

Mobilization plans/precisions of:	1935 MP 35	29 November 1937 MP 22	12 February 1941 MP 41	23 April 1941 (clarification of MP 41)	Total number of divisions planned	138	222	314	303
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This contradicts the argument that the Red Army could not have deployed properly because mobilization had not yet been triggered.

2. the 1st stage (until January/February 1941) – a long-term strategy stage of continuous growth and perfection of all bases

The year 1937

The peacetime strength of the Red Army in 1937 was about 1,200,000 army personnel (22.6% of the wartime strength), and the wartime strength after mobilization (land and air forces, naval fleet, and rear services) was planned at 5,300,000 AA according to Mobilization Plan 35. There was thus a mobilization effort of 4,100,000 reservists (77.4% of wartime strength). In the fall of 1937, the "Perspective Plan of the Development and Reorganization of the Red Army in 1938-1942" was prepared, presented to the leadership of the party and government on November 27, 1937, and confirmed as early as November 29, 1937. According to Sakharov, M.V., the demands of the Party and Government on the Red Army were "to be capable of repelling an attack by the enemy simultaneously in the West and in the East and to carry the fight to the enemy's territory." Key figures of the development of peacetime strength based on the perspective plan are recorded in the following table:

Table III.2

In the inventory as of 01 January 1938	Planned development in the years 1938 to the end of 1942
Planned increase/reduction in%	Rifle troops Rifle corps Rifle divisions Number of AA (of which Fortified spaces)
25 96 636,940 20,940 25 96 744,569 25,670 0 0 16.9 22.6	Tank troops Leaderships of Pz.-/ Mech. Korps Panzerbrigaden Panzerregimenter Panzer Number of AA 4 32 - 4,950 90,880 4 29
11 9,572 95,866 0 25 (after deployment of 11 PzRgt.)	93.4 5.5 Cavalry Number of AA 195,690 138,560 -29.2
Artillery d. Reserve d. High Commands	Number of AA 34,160 43,160 26.4
Air Defense	Number of AA fighter aircraft of LV of centers 45,280 569 72,081 1,323 59.2 132.5
Air Forces aviation brigades	Number of AA aircraft 77 193.970 9,385 150 (at the end of 1941) 215,062 9,726 94.8 10.9 3.6
Rear services	Number of AA 87,610 78,782 -10.1
Number of Red Army AA peacetime strength	1,605,520 1,780,000

The People's Commissar for Defense, K. Voroshilov, justified the elaboration of the perspective plan 1. with the "necessity of strengthening the striking power and operational maneuverability of the Red Army" and 2. with the "mobilization of the Red Army in turn depending on the accumulation of material resources".⁸ On the basis of the "Perspective Plan of Development and Reorganization of the Red Army in 1938-1942," the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR approved the "Mobilization Plan of 1938-1939," entitled "Mobilization Plan 22," on November 29, 1937. The mobilization plan of the armed forces regulates the planned and timely transition of the army from the peacetime organization and staffing plan to that of wartime. From this point of view, Mobilization Plan 22 stipulated to be deployed in 1938/1939 in case of war:

Table III.3

Land Forces Rifle Divisions Cavalry Divisions Light Armored Brigades Heavy Armored Brigades Mounted Brigades	Air Forces Aviation Brigades of All Types (Including Seaplane Forces)	170 29 27 4 3
4 155 Corps Artillery Regiments Artillery Regiments of the High Command Reserve Independent Long Range Artillery Detachments Chemical Brigades		57 43 8 3

While the current Mobilization Plan 35 still envisaged 150 rifle divisions in the event of war, 170 rifle divisions were now to be deployed, 138 of them in the West and 32 in the East. Ninety-six divisions were planned as triple deployments. Thus the staffing plan and material-technical equipment plan for the state of war in 1938/1939 came into effect with the following key figures:

Table III.4

Wartime strength of the Red Army 1938-1939	Civilian personnel	Horses	6,503,500	78,217	1,375,300
Tanks (including T-38 - 3,200)	Aircraft (including heavy TB-3 and DB-3 - 2220)	Guns	Motor vehicles	Tractors	15,613
					11,000
					15,218
					305,780
					76,560

Mobilization Plan 22 provided for the formation of the following units in the first year of the war:

Table III.5

Formations	2nd order rifle divisions	aviation brigades	artillery regiments of the reserve of the high command	chemical brigade	30	80	4	1
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In addition, a railroad construction corps was planned outside the norm at a strength of 54,000 soldiers. 9 A comparison of the wartime strengths planned in 1938-1939 under Mobilization Plan 22 with the mobilization plan still in effect in 1937 is shown in the following table:

Table III.6

Weapon type	Planned under old mobilization plan 1935 to 1937	Planned under mobilization plan No. 22 for 1938-1939	Planned increase/reduction in%	Gunnery troops of which	Fortified spaces	Number of
gunnery divisions	n.d.	69,000	150	3,906,300	161,000	170 - 133.3
Armored troops	Armored	brigades	Tanks	153,200	40	11,300
				208,700	32	15.613
				36.2	- 20 (temporary)	38.2
Cavalry	Cavalry	Divisions	27	25	-7.4	Artillery
						Guns
				109,200	13,054	176,500
				15,218	61.6	16.6
Motor Forces	Motor	Vehicles	69,000	n/a	188,100	305.780
						172.6
Air Defense	142,100	277,400	95.2	Air Force	AA	Aircraft
				340,900	n.a.	384,300
				11,000	12.7	- Rear Services
				677,800	186,800	-72.4
Total Red Army	5,300,000	6,503,500	22.7			

A detailed evaluation of the perspective plan 1938-1942 of the quantitative and qualitative development of the Red Army and the mobilization plan for the years 1938-1939 worked out on this basis leads to the following conclusion:

1. main content of both the perspective plan 1938-1942 and the mobilization plan 22 is to ensure the defensive mission of the Red Army with a focus on the West, but also the perfection of defense in the Far East. Over the course of about 5 years, the peacetime strength of the Red Army was to increase by only 10.8%. The number of rifle corps was to remain at 25 and the number of rifle divisions in the peacetime structure at 96 by 1942. A noteworthy development was envisaged for more defensive branches of arms; such as the increase in the number of AA of fortified spaces by 22.6%, in case of mobilization even by 133.3%, the substantial expansion of the number of AA of air defense by 59.2%

including the increase in the number of fighter planes to cover the main political and economic centers of the country by 132.5%.

2. despite the defensive mission given to the Red Army, work was carried out with extraordinary single-mindedness on the comprehensive creation of the foundations for a modern army capable of offensive action. This included:

- the modernization of the Red Army, primarily through motorization and mechanization;
- the increased provision of tanks and aircraft;
- Increasing the striking power of the rifle divisions by raising a second artillery regiment per rifle division;
- the abolition of the territorial principle of mobilization. This was intended to prevent the deployment of purely national formations and to increase their reliability in action by composing troops according to extraterritorial characteristics.
- the continuous, albeit limited, increase in the peacetime strength of the Red Army, and
- The continued reduction of cavalry and rear services while motorizing rear services.

Characteristic for the entire planning in 1937, both for the perspective plan 1938-1942 of the Red Army and for the mobilization plan 1938-1939, is the consideration of the still limited economic possibilities of the armament industry of the USSR. Thus, in view of insufficient material security, it was decided, limited in time until 01 January 1939, to equip 79 rifle divisions "...due to the non-security of the material part..." initially only with one artillery regiment and one heavy howitzer division instead of two artillery regiments. The second artillery regiments of the rifle divisions were to be equipped "... as they arrived from industry." Also, of the total of 40 planned armored brigades, it was envisaged that only 29 armored brigades and 11 armored regiments would be temporarily held in peacetime inventory in 1938 because of "...shortage of the material part...". Such formulations as "...depending on the accumulation of material resources..." are found several times in the above-mentioned plans. Even M.V. Sakharov had to confess: "The entire enlargement of the Red Army in accordance with Mobilization Plan 22, so also the planned 2nd order formations in the course of the first year of the war, were calculated in dependence on the receipt of armament, combat technology and equipment on the basis of the Perspective Plan 1938-1942 and coordinated with the State Plan."

For these reasons, structural improvements and increases in the strength of the Red Army were planned only within the limits of the production possibilities of armament, combat technology and equipment, and thus a fairly moderate quantitative increase was planned. The General Staff also kept the Red Army's personnel strength relatively low in the interest of using manpower in the heavy and armaments industries.

While the peacetime strength of the Red Army was to increase by only 173,480 AA to 1,780,000 AA in the planning period until the end of 1942, i.e. in the course of about five years, it was planned to strengthen the Red Army substantially by 1,203,500 to 6,503,500 AA in the event of war according to Mobilization Plan 22. Thus, according to the figures of the perspective and mobilization plans, in the event of war, even in 1938, 4,723,500 reservists or unserved personnel, i.e., 75.4% of the planned wartime strength of the Red Army, would still have had to be mobilized. Even the strength of 170 rifle divisions planned for the event of war, with a peacetime strength of 96 divisions, would have required the deployment of another 74 divisions, i.e., certainly the triggering of general mobilization before a first strike, which would by no means have remained hidden from world public opinion. The number of troops stationed in the East after the mobilization had been carried out was to amount to 1,411,700 AA

according to this plan. These plans thus clearly confirm the political defensive mission given to the Red Army for the years 1938/1939, to be ready to defend the USSR both in the West and in the East. From the contents of the perspective plan of the development of the Red Army, extending to the year 1942, as well as the mobilization plan 22 for the years 1938/1939, undoubtedly in enforcement of the political directives, an order to develop the Red Army into an offensive-capable army with an aggressive mission is not discernible. The Red Army of those years was not capable of achieving strategic surprise. However, the planned decisive increase in the number of tanks, the expansion of the motorization level of the rear services, the structural perfection of the air forces and the conversion of the rifle troops to the cadre system as well as their equipment with a second artillery regiment per rifle division indicate that through the qualitative perfection of the Red Army, initially without a significant numerical increase, the further systematic and longer-term expansion of the structural and armament bases for a formidable army was planned. The General Staff's operational plan of March 24, 1938, which translated the political objective of the time to be ready to defend the USSR in both the East and the West into planning documents for the Red Army's actions, also testifies to an active defensive strategy during these years.

The year 1938

On the basis of the perspective plan for the years 1938 to 1942, the peacetime strength of the Red Army in 1938 was to increase to 1,606,520 AA (24.7% of the wartime strength), and the wartime strength after mobilization to 6,503,500 AA. Taking into account the transition to the cadre principle of replenishment established in Mobilization Plan 22, the peacetime Red Army rifle division strength was to remain at 96 divisions in 1938 with the following replenishment level:

Table III.7

96 rifle divisions, of which: 3 rifle divisions with 13,000 soldiers each 9 rifle divisions with 10,000 soldiers each 38 rifle divisions with 6,950 soldiers each 36 rifle divisions with 5,220 soldiers each (triple divisions) 10 mountain divisions with 4,000 soldiers each

As yet, all the near-war 10,000- and 13,000-strong divisions were stationed in the Far East. In the West, the Red Army General Staff's calculation of March 24, 1938, called for the deployment of 124 rifle/mountain rifle divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, and 26 armored and mechanized brigades. Soon after the confirmation of Mobilization Plan 22, partial mobilization measures were carried out in 1938 in connection with the aggravation of the situation between Germany and Czechoslovakia with the aim of providing military assistance to Czechoslovakia. In the Kiev and Byelorussian Special Military Districts, as well as in the Leningrad Military District, 17 divisions were replenished to wartime strength by conscripting 8,000 reservists per division. Furthermore, three armored corps, 15 armored brigades and a number of aviation brigades, 34 air bases, etc. were replenished. To this end, the directive of September 29, 1938, stipulated the conscription of 328,700 reservists to the so-called "Great Training Exercises," including the conscription of 250-275 of the registered commanders and political workers. The fall discharges of the personnel stock intended for transfer to the reserves were suspended. A total of 60 rifle divisions, including 30 divisions in the western military districts, 16 cavalry divisions, 3 armored corps, 22 independent armored brigades and 17 aviation brigades were included in the mobilization measures in the zone up to the Urals. The People's Commissar for Defense of the USSR ordered in his directive to put the Vinnitsa Army Group on combat readiness and to bring it close to the state border of the USSR, as well as to concentrate the Shitomir Army Group in the Novograd-Volynski and Shepetovka

areas. The air defenses of six western military districts were put on combat readiness and the field commands of the army groups were deployed as of 01 September 1938.

The Red Army mobilization measures reached their peak in the third decade of September 1938. Thus, the strength of the Red Army grew to more than 2,000,000 soldiers in September 1938. However, on September 29, 1938, the Munich Agreement on the cession of the Sudetenland to Germany was signed, so that the planned operations could not be carried out. In connection with military disputes over border disputes with the Japanese Army at Lake Khassan in the Far East, the Red Army, on the orders of the People's Commissar for Defense, established combat readiness in units and detachments of the Primorsk Army and the Pacific Fleet on July 31, 1938. Within the framework of mobilization measures, the units and formations of the Far Eastern Front were replenished. However, the events at Lake Khasan revealed serious deficiencies in the mobilization of the 1st Far Eastern Front (Primorsk Army) and in the work of the staffs of the formations and troop units, so that in November 1938 the Supreme War Council under the People's Commissar for Defense determined a series of measures to immediately increase combat and mobilization readiness. ¹⁵ Although there was no significant increase in the size of the Red Army in the years 1936 to 1938, as evidenced by the rifle troops, the conversion to the cadre system, however, laid essential foundations for a later strengthening of the Red Army. To this end, the three rifle regiments of the rifle divisions were so arranged that any of them could be deployed to the next higher structure, the rifle division, if necessary. ¹⁶ In case of implementation of general mobilization in 1938, the number of rifle divisions could have been 170, 110 of which were so-called "three-part" divisions. In the North Caucasian Military District, the unfolding of Rifle Regiment 221 into the 74th Rifle Division, disguised as reservist training, was successfully tested. On November 13, 1938, the Main Military Council took a decision to form an additional 30 new rifle divisions in the event of mobilization, but they could not be introduced into combat sooner than after the expiration of three months, i.e., after that time when the front, it was assumed, would need reinforcement with fresh divisions.

The year 1939

On January 01, 1939, the peacetime strength of the Red Army was 1,943,000 AA. Thus it already exceeded the peacetime strength, which according to the perspective plan was not to be reached until 1942, and reached 3.5 times that of 1930. The total development of the Red Army's rifle squad divisions from 01 January 1937 to 01 January 1939 is shown in the following table:

Table III.8

On 01.01.1937	On 01.01.1938	On 01.01.1939	Rifle Divisions	Of which -Cadre Divisions - Mixed Divisions - Territorial Divisions	88	49	4	35	86	50	2	34	84	84	- - Mountain Divisions (all are Cadre Divisions)	9	10	14	Total Divisions	97	96
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As the above table shows on the example of the number of rifle divisions, in the years 1936 to 1938 there was no significant increase in the number of rifle divisions of the Red Army, but the number of army personnel increased. Their conversion to the cadre system of replenishment is also clear. In connection with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by German troops on March 15, 1939, the combat and mobilization readiness of the Red Army was increased. On March 23, 1939, the General Staff, in accordance with instructions from the Soviet government, issued a directive on mobilization to the military councils of all military districts on the order of reinforcement and deployment of troops depending on the tense international situation. The directive took into account the experience of the

partial mobilization of the Kiev and Byelorussian Special Military Districts in the summer of 1938 and provided for the mobilization of troops to be carried out according to two variants with the letters "A" and "B." 19 With the signal "A" all troops in covered form were to be replenished to wartime staffing levels within a period of 10 days. The reserve units and the war commissariats were not to be reinforced. On signal "B" only partial reinforcement was to be made. In continuation of the directive of March 23, the General Staff issued on May 20, 1939, another directive on mobilization No. 2/1/50698, signed by the People's Commissar for Defense and the Chief of the General Staff, to the military councils of military districts and armies on the conduct of general and open mobilization and partial mobilization of the Red Army under the current MP 22. General and open mobilization was to be declared on the basis of telegrams signed by the People's Commissar for Defense by local military bodies in orders to be posted in each locality.

The covered partial mobilization was given the designation "large-scale training exercises", the implementation of which was planned according to variants "A" and "B" (see above). This type of mobilization was not publicly announced, but those to be called up only received the personnel order to present themselves. The directive stipulated that all measures of the covered partial mobilization were to be carried out under the strictest secrecy and likewise within a period of 10 days. Thus, it was ordered not to publish in the press any information on the training and conduct of the "Great Instructional Exercises" (of the covered partial mobilization), not to hold assemblies and meetings, not to release wartime financial resources, not to carry out enlistments of service personnel, transportation and horses from other military districts, and to carry out material provisioning and supply of troops according to peacetime norms and at the expense of current rations and existing reserves. Mobilization of civil authorities and offices is not carried out for reasons of secrecy. In May 1939, work began on drawing up the bases for reorganizing the Red Army, a crucial part of which was a new system of mobilization deployment of the land forces. The basic idea was to create, even in peacetime before the start of hostilities, a strong standing army prepared for wartime action, which could be replenished to wartime strength in the shortest possible time with minimal mobilization effort. To this end, it was planned to convert the divisions, which had previously been covered by the so-called "threefold deployment" but were not to be deployed until mobilization, into open units, i.e. existing units, albeit with a reduced level of replenishment. This was intended to create decisive conditions for: 1. to exclude the reorganization of divisions, which would largely uncover a mobilization; 2. to merely have to replenish the basic structures of the divisions (e.g., commanders, staffs, core personnel, regular crews, etc.), which would then already exist and be consolidated in peacetime, in a prewar period; 3. To be able to carry out these call-ups of reservists disguised under the pretext of reservist exercises, summer camps, retraining on new combat technology, etc.; 4. To be able to establish the unity of the formations for combat operations more quickly by expanding the training elements already mastered in the course of combat training. The abundance of measures carried out at the highest level in the short term (cf. Table III.9) reveals the extraordinary importance attached to this restructuring.

Table III.9 (cf. p. 99)

July 13-14, 1939 July 14, 1939 July 15, 1939 July 16, 1939 July 21-22, 1939 July 27, 1939 August 01, 1939 August 10, 1939 August 15, 1939 August 25, 1939 September 01, 1939 September 02. September 1939 First deliberations on the reorganization of the Red Army; deliberation of these proposals by the People's Commissar for Defense by the top political and military leadership in Stalin's Cabinet; decision by the Politburo of the CC of the CP(B) "... to develop all divisions of the Triple Deployment already in peacetime ... to unfold as independent divisions"; decision of the Supreme Military Council to

"hurriedly work out" these confirmed new structures; conference of the People's Commissar for Defense to discuss substantive problems of the tasks received; decision of the Supreme Military Council to form a commission to work out all questions connected with the reorganization; meeting of the commission. After examination, the commission found that the material reserves for these new structures existed in all military districts and proposed to transfer to them by 01. November 1939; deliberation of the reorganization measures in Stalin's Cabinet; further deliberation of these measures in Stalin's Cabinet; directive of the People's Commissar for Defense to the military councils of the Western and Central Military Districts; further deliberation of these measures in Stalin's Cabinet; Politburo of the CC of the CP(B) confirms the proposals of the People's Commissar for Defense on the future strength and structure of the Red Army; adoption of the law on universal conscription; Council of People's Commissars issues the plan of reorganization of the Red Army.

Obviously, the reorganization of the Red Army was initiated by Stalin personally in May 1939. Thus, the first consultation on this matter already took place in Stalin's cabinet on July 13/14, 1939, and also the further consultations of these organizational measures for the perfection of the Red Army on August 01, 10 and 25, 1939 by the highest political and military leadership took place in Stalin's cabinet, according to an account of the Russian State Military Archives. In May/June 1939, the de facto reorganization of the army groups of the Special Military Districts into armies took place in the European part of the country, and in July 1939, the deployment of additional rifle divisions began, albeit still according to the "triple deployment" scheme. Also in May/June 1939, reservists were called up to deploy a number of rifle divisions in the Urals and eastward to conduct combat operations at Chalchin Gol. In the spring of 1939, 345,000 reservists were called up for the "Great Training Exercises" (partial mobilization). But troops were also transferred to the Far East from other military districts. For example, the 37th Rifle Division of the Byelorussian Special Military District was transferred to the Siberian Military District. By 01 August 1939, the strength of the Red Army had increased to more than 2,000,000 army personnel. In accordance with the decisions taken to reorganize the Red Army, on 15 August 1939 the People's Commissar for Defense issued a directive to the military councils of the Western and Central Military Districts with the task, in the period from 25 August to 01 December 1939, of transferring the existing cadre divisions to the new roster of 8,900 soldiers each, and to restructure 36 divisions of the triple division into 92 divisions with a strength of 6,000 soldiers each, as well as to form 18 command bodies (staffs) for rifle corps to ensure command and control of the large number of newly created rifle divisions. The military councils of the Transcaucasian, Transbaikalian, and Central Asian Military Districts, as well as the 1st and 2nd Red Banner Armies (Far East), were not given this task. In August 1939, the military missions of England, France, and the USSR held tripartite discussions among their general staffs on joint action against the "block of aggressors." According to "official data" of the military missions, at that time England, France, Poland and the USSR had 311 divisions, 11,700 aircraft, 15,400 tanks, 9,600 heavy guns. In Germany and Italy, according to calculations of military missions, they faced 168 divisions, 7,700 aircraft, 8,400 tanks, 4,350 heavy guns. On August 15, 1939, at the meeting of the military missions of the USSR, Great Britain and France in Moscow, the Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, Shaposhnikov, informed that the Red Army could, upon "request," deploy 120 rifle divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 9,000 to 10,000 tanks and 5,000 to 5,500 aircraft and move them to the front in Europe. "The concentration of the army will take place within 8 to 20 days". According to different variants of the beginning of a war of a possible coalition against Germany, the deployment of 63, 90 or 120 rifle divisions with a total of 2,000,000 men was proposed. The measures carried out to perfect mobilization readiness by the Red Army in the summer of 1939 were referred to in the secret documents as "org measures of the rifle divisions, motor vehicle

divisions, and rifle corps commands." 22 After the failure of the talks of the military missions of the USSR, Great Britain and France, which were clearly directed against Germany and represented a new attempt at encirclement, the conclusion of the treaty between the USSR and Germany took place in Moscow on August 23, 1939. At the IV. Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on September 1, 1939, the law on general conscription was adopted and already implemented by the end of 1939, transitioning to new structures and changed forms of replenishment of the Red Army. With the aim of increasing the number of militarily trained reservists and ensuring the numerical reinforcement of the armed forces, the compulsory military service age was lowered from 21 to 19 years, and for graduates of secondary schools even to 18 years. This was to ensure the system of replenishment of the Red Army with trained reservists, create a large potential of reservists for the creation of a multi-million army, further increase the combat value of units and formations, facilitate the implementation of mobilization, and shorten the transition times of replenished troops to combat deployment by faster establishment of unity. The active service period for the NCO corps of the land forces was increased from 2 to 3 years, and for the enlisted men and NCO corps of the air forces and border troops to 3 years.

On the ships of the border troops, the period of service was now 4 years, and on the warships and in the units of the naval fleet even 5 years. The law on general compulsory military service also significantly extended the period of reserve service to one and a half years for enlisted men and to 3 years for officers. 23 Thus, the Law on General Conscription served to rapidly increase the size of the immediately available trained reservist potential. Already on 02 September 1939, the "Plan of Reorganization of the Land Forces of the USSR for 1939–1940" was confirmed and issued as a directive by the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (No: 1355–279ss). This plan was adopted with the "aim of strengthening the rifle troops" and provided for increasing the number of rifle divisions to 173 divisions already in peacetime, while completely abandoning the principle of triple division. The divisions were to be:

Table III.10

173 rifle divisions, including: 17 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers each; 1 rifle division with 12,000 soldiers each; 33 rifle divisions with 8,900 soldiers each; 76 rifle divisions with 6,000 soldiers each; 33 rifle divisions with 3,000 soldiers each; 13 mountain rifle divisions with 4,000 soldiers each.

The number of rifle divisions with more than 12,000 AA thus increased to 18 divisions. Already in the summer of 1939, a commission had prepared proposals for the restructuring of the rifle divisions with a personnel strength of 18,000 AA. A "division of the new organization" was designated as a rifle division that had two artillery regiments, an antitank division, and an antiaircraft division in its inventory. 25 It should be noted that neither the name nor the content of this plan can be justified by the German–Polish war, which began on 01 September 1939, or by the impending war of the USSR against Poland (from 17 September 1939). This is also confirmed by the beginning of the first preparatory work for the reorganization of the Red Army already in May 1939. In preparation for the campaign against Poland, which began on September 17, 1939, the reconquest of the western territories of Belarus and Ukraine, the People's Commissar for Defense of the USSR issued already on September 6, 1939, Directive no. 14650 to the military councils of the Leningrad, Byelorussian Special, Kiev Special, Moscow, Kalinin, Orel and Kharkov military districts with the instruction to call up the registered reservists to the military units and facilities of the military districts under the pretext of "large-scale training exercises". All units and installations, including reserve units, of the military districts concerned were mobilized. The rear services were given the wartime structure. The call-ups were carried out on the basis of

Mobilization Plan 22 and Directive No.2/1/50698 according to Variant "A" in strict secrecy with personnel presentation orders without making the order public. Assuming that a covered partial mobilization required about 10 days until combat readiness was established, these "large training exercises" of the western military districts were triggered as early as 07 September 1939. 26 The covered partial mobilization was still beset with a number of serious deficiencies, as shown in Table III.11 below. While the supply of reservists could still be rated satisfactory, with 93.3% of those called up, the supply of horses and especially of transportation was totally inadequate. A whole series of units and detachments received no supply at all. Thus, Flak Regiment 1 of the air defense suffered a shortage of 85 vehicles and 27 tractors, which were urgently needed as traction means for transporting the guns.

Table III.11

Number of mobilized units and formations in the Byelorussian Special Military District Arrival of mobilized replenishments in units and formations of the Byelorussian Special Military District as of September 14, 1939 Reservists Horses Vehicles 19 93.3% 88.6% 9 units remained without supply 55.9% 6 units remained

The Soviet Union's Polish campaign began on September 17, 1939, and was completed on October 10, 1939. Despite the above-mentioned mobilization deficiencies, the Red Army achieved the objective of its Polish campaign. According to the text of the document of the USSR People's Commissar for Defense dated October 23, 1939, no. 81229 ss/ow, addressed to the Politburo of the CC of the CP(B) and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, "in connection with the establishment of new borders" (in the west of the USSR) and the "introduction of our troops on the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania proves the necessity of changes" in the measures established earlier by the directive of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of 02 September 1939. What is meant is the annexation of the Baltic States. These changes in parts of the rifle troops were justified by the "necessity of maintaining troops on the territory of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus but also the troops deployed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the reinforced stock". As the USSR People's Commissar for Defense informed in the above-mentioned document of October 23, 1939, the events developing in the West also led the Red Army to deploy the rifle divisions in the seven Western Military Districts still according to the old war structure (with only one artillery regiment per rifle division). On October 26, 1939, the Politburo of the CP Central Committee (B) confirmed the People's Commissar's proposals and set the peacetime structural strength of the Red Army at 173 rifle divisions. Now 43 rifle divisions already have a replenishment level of 14,000 soldiers and another 57 rifle divisions have more than 12,000 soldiers. However, to avoid a large expansion of Red Army strength for economic reasons for the time being, it was proposed by the People's Commissar for Defense to increase the number of cadre divisions with the staffing plan of 3,000 army personnel to 60 divisions. 28 Accordingly, the 173 divisions of rifle troops were filled up as follows:

Table III.12

43 rifle divisions with 14,000 soldiers (including 12 divisions Ukrainian Front, 12 divisions Baltic Front, 15 divisions in the Far East, 1 division Leningrad, 1 division Karelian, 1 division Odessa and 1 division Transbaikal Military District); 3 rifle divisions with motorized Rückw. Services with 12,000 soldiers (in Mongolia); 54 rifle divisions with 12,000 soldiers (including 10 divisions Ukrainian Front, 10 divisions Baltic Front, 13 divisions Leningrad Military District); 60 rifle divisions with 3,000 soldiers each; 13 mountain divisions with 4,000 soldiers each.

29 Thus, the peacetime roster of the Red Army grew to 2,408,600 army personnel. In the fall of 1939, for the attack on Finland (the so-called Winter War), the General Staff prepared a troop grouping divided into 4 armies on the territory of the Leningrad Military District. To create the attack grouping, rifle divisions from six western military districts (Kalinin, Western Special, Baltic, Byelorussian Special, Moscow and Kiev Special Military Districts) were concentrated in the Leningrad Military District. At the beginning of the Soviet-Finnish War, the grouping of Soviet troops on the territory of the Leningrad Military District included 425,000 soldiers, 1,476 tanks, 1,576 guns, and 2,446 aircraft. The total number of divisions of the Red Army in the conditions of development of combat operations of the Soviet-Finnish war, which began on November 30, 1939, was set at 160 divisions by the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on December 28, 1939. At the end of December 1939 the General Staff additionally deployed the 13th Army and on 07 January 1940 formed the Northwest Front from the command of the Leningrad Military District. On 01 January 1940, the strength of the Northwest Front grouping was 551,000 soldiers. For the final stage of the war, the General Staff formed the 15th Army on the basis of the Southern Group of the 8th Army. On February 11, 1940, the second stage of combat operations began, which ended with the breakthrough through the Mannerheim Line and led to the conclusion of a peace treaty on March 12, 1940. At the end of the Soviet-Finnish war, 55 rifle divisions, 4 cavalry divisions, 8 armored brigades, and 3 airborne brigades were concentrated on the Northwest Front with a total strength of 761,000 soldiers (at the beginning of March) with a post strength of 917,000 soldiers. That is, the average replenishment of a division was about 12,400 soldiers. This fact, that despite the conduct of the war of aggression against Finland, the participating formations were not fully replenished in accordance with the war structure, but only about 83%, is extremely remarkable and allows conclusions to be drawn for the combat readiness of formations that were not fully replenished during the German-Russian war that began on June 22, 1941. The replenishment of Red Army divisions with more than 650,000 reservists of soldier and NCO ranks and their establishment of readiness for war were carried out as "large training exercises" (partial mobilization). At the conclusion of the Soviet-Finnish War, the Red Army had 117 rifle divisions (including also motorized and mountain rifle divisions) replenished or in reinforced inventory according to the wartime staffing plan.